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The

COMER FAMILY

Goes To Town



By SALLIE B. COMER LATHROP



VOLUME II

V. 2



BIRMINGHAM PRINTING COMPANY

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The

COMER FAMILY

James to James

BY WILLIAM B. COMER, F.R.S.E.

ALBANY, N.Y.

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*My mother, Eva Jane Harris, taken at the
time of her marriage to Braxton
Bragg Comer*



Portrait of [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
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SALLIE B. COMER LATHROP
BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA

SET UP, PRINTED AND BOUND BY THE
BIRMINGHAM PRINTING COMPANY
BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA

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Sally B. Moore and Pat Cummings

The
COMER FAMILY
Goes To Town

CHAPTER I

"As unto the bow the cord is—
So unto man is woman.
Though she bends him, she obeys him
Though she draws him, yet she follows,
Useless each without the other."

"Song of Hiawatha"

We moved from the plantations at Comer, Alabama, up into the mountains of Calhoun County, at Anniston, into a duplex house of many rooms built for two families and owned by Mr. Tyler. Mr. Tyler and his family lived in a mansion upon a hill behind our house. All the Tylers rode horseback. Miss Carrie galloped by our house daily, followed by her groom.

We children started to school immediately to a private school taught by Miss Daisy Brewer. It was there I met Minnie Parker and began a friendship and admiration which has lasted till this day. Minnie lived in the Anniston Inn, not far from the school. She asked me to go there with her after school to play. I said, "I must ask my mother for permission."

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My mother said, "No, you cannot go home to play with any girl unless her mother has first called on me."

All the ladies of Anniston came to call on my mother. Mrs. Duncan Parker came last. My mother liked her best.

Looking back, in retrospect, I realize that Anniston was a snobbish little town, practically owned by a few families. The rich people were Episcopalians. There were two beautiful stone Episcopal churches, Grace Church (near where we lived) and Saint Michael's, under construction. Both were built by the Noble and Tyler families. The Methodist Church was a big barn of a building.

Cousin Mollie Trapp announced that if we wished to get into society, we must join the Episcopal Church. Papa said, "We will go to our own Methodist Church. We go to church to get religion, not to get into society."

Immediately, I was asked to play the organ. Papa taught the young men's Bible class in Sunday school. Mr. Jo Willett, a brilliant young lawyer, and Tom Kilby, a young industrialist, were in his class and sang in the choir. They were always present and began a life-long friendship with my father. I played the organ there until I went to college.

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Dr. Morris was our preacher. He had several sons. Some of them are now in the North Alabama Conference. Afterwards, Dr. Alonzo Monk came to be our minister. I met Dr. Monk several years later in Macon, Georgia, where he was pastor at Mulberry Street Church. He confided to me that when he came to Anniston and saw his church and his choir, and his organ—and me!—his heart sank into his boots.

However, I continued to play, and Mr. Jo Willett and Tom Kilby continued to sing, and the church grew and prospered. The preachers always wanted papa to go to church at night, but papa refused. He said, "I go to church in the morning—in the daytime. I am a trout. I bite in the day. I am no cat fish, to bite at night."

Next fall, we children went to Noble Institute to school. I was thrilled. I was in love with young Sam Noble, but he did not know it. On Saturdays, in summer, he and other boys passed our house on the way to the swimming hole. I crouched behind the blinds of a front parlor, happy to see him pass. I think Minnie was in love with Will Heidt.

She and I would sometimes go in the afternoon to a near-by wood and sing duets. My favorite was

"Oh, how can a poor Gypsy maiden like me
Ever hope the proud bride of a Noble to be."

Minnie and I are still friends though she lives in New York City now and is one of the real grand-dames.

Grown-ups do not know how to deal with adolescents. It is a painful period. One afternoon, I was dressed to go out, and mother told me to go by the grocery store of Cater and Johnson and order two fat hens sent to our house. I thought, "fat hens! How vulgar!" I was reluctant. The clerk was a man. After ordering the hens, I hemmed and hawed and hung around, looking embarrassed. The clerk said, "Anything else?" Finally, I said, "The hens must be—ahem—rather plump." The man laughed in my face.

At school, Lilly Parker, older sister of my friend Minnie, and I were the only pupils to study Latin prose. Upstairs was a big, pleasant, sunny room with windows looking out upon the street. Lilly was in love with John Noble, Jr., the beau of the town. He knew our hour to study in this room, and during that hour he drove up and down and back again in front of our windows. John had a high buckboard and a black cob—a high-stepping animal. Sometimes he drove a team tandem. He was a sight to see. We

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spent our time peeping out the window, waving at John. He and Lilly were married soon afterwards. John did not care whether or not Lilly knew Latin prose. And papa always taught me mine at night.

The following year, papa decided a governess was best for us. Cousin Annie McDonald, Aunt Dodie's older daughter, and Maggie Ladson had been together four years at Wesleyan College, and it was through Cousin Annie that papa decided to bring Miss Maggie to live with us and teach his children. She came in September of 1887.

Cousin Lilly Drewry, of Eufaula, had been up to visit us. Her brother Johnny lived with us. One day papa came upon me with my nose buried in a yellow-back book (synonym in that period for trashy literature), *Diana de Poitiers* by Dumas. Cousin Lil had left it in her room. Papa took the book from me and threw it in the fire just as Diana was struggling in the arms of the villain, and said, "You need a governess. Don't read any book without my permission."

On Sunday afternoons, I begged to walk out on the streets with girls of my age. Never once was I permitted. We went to ride or walk as a family, altogether! Eva, our baby, was called the pretty baby of Anniston. If the family went walking, some one of us pushed Eva's perambulator. She was a cute

little one. People always flocked around her carriage when Betsy or Clara wheeled her on the streets.

In March of 1887, papa set out on his annual hunting trip to Saint Andrew's Bay in Florida. As he and his companions travelled by wagon team, and as there was no railroad into that territory even as far as Ozark, mother knew there would be no letters from papa during that month.

The rains had been heavy, but papa did not realize how high the Alabama River was till his train got to Montgomery. The river was out of bounds. Train service south was discontinued. Papa tried to hire a man to row him across the river. No man would dare. Finally he bought a bateau, and when last seen, was paddling himself across the roaring, swirling, swollen Alabama River. Arriving safely on the other side, he caught a train to where his outfit waited and "went in" to the forest for his month's vacation.

The abandoned bateau was discovered when the waters receded. The man who sold it to my father told about seeing Mr. Comer in midstream battling the torrent. A reporter got hold of the story and it appeared in headlines that probably Mr. Comer had drowned and his body washed down river to the Gulf.

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Think of my mother! Of her agony! People flocked to our house to offer sympathy. Mother refused to see anybody. My mother remained on her knees all day, weeping and praying. We children cowered round her—her grief frightened us. It was overwhelming—it was despair! but always she prayed to God, "Bring him back—bring him back. Dear God, bring him back."

Mother was always a fundamentalist, a believer in prayer, and one bright, sunny morning he walked into our house, and into our arms. He had been out of civilization, beyond reach of letters, or wires and did not dream that anyone knew about the hiring of the bateau.

Long afterwards, I heard papa say, "Baby, suppose I had been drowned in the Alabama River during that crossing, what would you have done?" She answered, "I planned to take my children back to live on the plantation."

Later on in that spring season, Mr. Culpepper came to our church to hold a revival. Dr. Monk asked papa if Mr. Culpepper could be our house guest for two weeks of the revival. Papa and mother were going away on a trip together and Grandpa Harris was with us children. I was left in charge of the house.

Mr. Culpepper worked on me to save my soul. I was brightly converted. He said I was the Lord's anointed—that God wanted me to be a missionary in foreign fields. I thought and sang about "Greenland's icy mountains and India's coral strand." When Mr. Culpepper called up mourners and sinners to the altar, I prostrated myself there. I dragged Fletcher and Donald—protesting and resisting, to kneel with me. I fasted and prayed.

As he was leaving Annison, Mr. Culpepper gave me a picture of two hearts,—large hearts. One heart, unregenerate, had all sins coming out of it—the other was a regenerate heart, and all the virtues were oozing out of its periphery. I coaxed Grandpa Harris to give me \$5.00, with which I bought a frame and when my parents returned, they found this huge picture hanging over the living-room mantel. I invited papa and mother to join us in family prayer that night and acted generally like a smug little prig.

My father disliked too much display of emotional religion. His conduct was inspired by a desire to act right, regardless of the consequences, and not from fear of hell fire. He blew cold on my plans to become a missionary. He always read the Bible at night before he said his prayers. My picture of the two big hearts was moved upstairs into my bed-

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room and later perished in the flames when our house burned.

Papa tried very hard to raise his family within the influence of the Sunday school and church. Down at Spring Hill he was superintendent of the Sunday school and taught the men's Bible class, and when we left there the members of the class presented him with a gold headed stick. Mother played the organ and led the singing and as soon as we could walk we were taken with the family to Sunday school and church.

It was the same thing in Anniston and when we moved to Birmingham, one of the first things papa did was to move our membership and join us all in the First Methodist Church here, where we have been ever since. He was superintendent of the Sunday school here, and was also a member of the Board of Stewards and on the Board of Trustees until his death.

In our home it was never a question whether we would or would not be up in time Sunday morning for Sunday school and church—that was just the rule and everybody understood it. Just as his father and mother trained him in early youth to go to Sunday school and church, so he pursued exactly the same course with us. He wanted us to have the benefit

of Christian environment and the association which goes with church attendance.

We all rode horseback in those days. My pony was a sleek, jet black mare named Lucy. My riding habit was of green broadcloth, made in Louisville, Kentucky; a long, draped skirt for side-saddle and a black silk (beaver) hat, and trousers of the same material as the skirt.

Lucy was full of mean tricks. She loved papa's riding horse and when papa rode with me, she was gentle as a lamb. With other horses she was tricky. Sometimes I rode with Minnie Parker. Occasionally Wood Wrenshall went along. The sight of him made my heart go pit-a-pat.

I often rode with Emily Tyler. Once, Emily and I were riding along when suddenly Lucy bucked and threw me over her head. My skirt caught on the horn of the saddle, I stood on my head in the beaver hat with my feet in the air till Emily's groom extricated me. When they saw I was unhurt, they burst out laughing. Lucy stood gentle till I remounted. Another time, Lucy reared and fell over backwards. I was not hurt, but was so frightened papa sent her away and had another horse brought up from the plantation for me to ride.

Cousin Annie McDonald, older daughter of Aunt Dodie and Uncle Jim, had visited us the first year we lived in Anniston and Cousin Johnny Drewry fell in love with her. She promised to marry him. Cousin Johnny was a nephew on my father's side of the family, as great-uncle John Drewry was brother to Grandma Comer. Cousin Annie was a niece on my mother's side, so, though they were both our cousins, they were not kin to each other.

Aunt Dodie furnished the room in our house for the bride and groom; deep velvet carpet, handsome furniture and silk draperies, it was a fine bridal chamber. How proudly I exhibited its splendors to my school friends.

Aunt Dodie and Uncle Jim gave their daughter cash, gilt-edge bonds for a wedding present, thinking the interest would supplement the salary Cousin Johnny earned working for the wholesale grocery company of Comer and Trapp. Quickly, Cousin Johnny persuaded Cousin Annie to sell her bonds and set him up in business. He bought a brick yard at Choccolocco and moved his bride out there. We often went out to see Cousin Annie.

Uncle Jim came up to look over the brickyard. Uncle Jim said to me, "Sallie B, they are keeping no books,—no records." Of course, that brickyard busi-

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ness soon bankrupted, and the Drewry family moved to Cuthbert.

Aunt Dodie prepared a home for them in the house on Lumpkin Street, where she and my mother were born. Eva Drewry (their baby born in Choccolocco) grew into a woman of fine character and today, with her husband, Lewis Hill, lives in the old Harris home, where their great-grandparents lived "before the war."

Eva Drewry was born about the time that Bragg was born. I remember great-aunt Lizzie Drewry, of Eufaula, visited us and supervised at Bragg's birth, and then went on out to see about her own grand-baby at Choccolocco.

Cousin Eva McDonald graduated from Wesleyan in 1887 and came to visit us. She was several years older than I and absolutely beautiful, with wavy brown hair, complexion fair as a lily and laughing blue eyes like Uncle Jim's. She was a charming girl, in looks and manners, and idolized by her parents. She and cousin Annie were both artists, as many oil paintings in the McDonald family testify. Cousin Eva had a lovely voice and could play her own accompaniments and sing. I adored her.

She insisted upon returning to Wesleyan for one more year of art under Miss Mollie Mason. Uncle

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Jim and Aunt Dodie were lonely without her, but they finally agreed and that fall cousin Eva went back for her fourth year at Wesleyan, and we little Comers started to school with Miss Maggie as our governess. It was during cousin Eva McDonald's last year at Wesleyan that we all went camping in Florida.



Church built by my grandfather, John Fletcher Comer, in 1840. A trust fund from the Comer estate helps to maintain this church.

CHAPTER II

Perhaps you, my reader, will remember Mr. Archie McLeod, the promoter who persuaded my father to buy the tract of land in Florida, to plant tropical fruits and cocoanuts and have them ready to ship to market by the time Mr. I. C. Plant built his railroad to Fort Myers. In 1887 Fort Myers was still an Indian Fort.

Cocoanut trees require ten years to grow before they bear fruit. Our cocoanuts had been planted before we moved to Anniston; bananas were flourishing; orange trees were bearing; there were acres of guavas, and pine-apples.

Papa decided to take us all, mother, Miss Maggie, Betsy and all of us children, to spend the winter at a camp he had prepared for us on this plantation. Betsy would not permit Clara, her pretty mulatto daughter, to go because of the negro men working on the plantation.

We had a big, strong Negro, named Pink, a seafaring man, and his wife Matt to do the cooking. We all traveled down together to Jacksonville, Florida. There we left the sleeping car and took a

local train to Bartow, Florida, where we waited several hours for another local train to Punta Gorda.

At Bartow, we walked about, enjoying the strange sights. Especially do I remember trees with fruit much larger than oranges, growing in clusters. The natives called them shattucks. They lay in piles, rotting on the ground. Even the swamp hogs would not eat them. They were grapefruit. Papa taught us how to cut deep, past the inner, bitter, thick, white rind, and get to the delicious inside. Papa always claimed that we were among the first people to eat grapefruit.

Going down from Bartow to Punta Gorda, we had the train almost to ourselves. Arrived at Punta Gorda, we spent the night at Hotel Charlotte Harbor, a fine resort hotel, which Mr. I. C. Plant had built at the terminus of his railroad. It was early in December. The hotel had opened for business the day of our arrival. The rooms and the accommodations were most luxurious. Each of us had a waitress behind his or her chair. The waitresses were white women. They thought we were a wonderful family. They said Eva was the prettiest baby they ever saw. They hovered around her high chair.

We were thrilled, spellbound. We explored the grounds, the sea wall, the sulphur spring, the docks.

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We could hardly be induced to go to bed. (About fifteen years ago, Aunt Georgie's brother, Mr. Barron Collier, bought and restored this old hotel and it is now a pleasant place for winter visitors.) To us, it seemed we had slept only a moment, when papa was calling us to get up and dress quickly, as we were to go farther in a sailboat.

After an early breakfast, we went to the pier and piled into a two-masted schooner papa had chartered for the trip down Charlotte's Harbor to Punta Rassa. We expected to spend the night at Punta Rassa and go next day through Big Hickory Pass and up the bay and river to our camp.

All our luggage—more than a dozen big trunks and boxes, was piled on board. There was a captain and a mate. We had an enormous basket of lunch and in the cabin was a sack containing fifty pounds of roasted coffee and another crocus sack holding a bushel of pineapples.

We started out with a fresh, fair breeze, which the captain said would take us quickly to Punta Rassa. We were as happy and gay as larks. It was our first boat trip. A big life boat, big enough for a dozen people, was in tow besides the schooner's dinghy. We ate our picnic lunch, and we dodged the heavy boom pole when the captain jibed the sail.

The whole family is subject to the same disease. It is a hereditary disease, and is not contagious. It is a disease of the blood, and is not a disease of the skin. It is a disease of the system, and is not a disease of the organs. It is a disease of the mind, and is not a disease of the body. It is a disease of the soul, and is not a disease of the flesh. It is a disease of the spirit, and is not a disease of the matter. It is a disease of the life, and is not a disease of the death. It is a disease of the eternal, and is not a disease of the temporal. It is a disease of the infinite, and is not a disease of the finite. It is a disease of the absolute, and is not a disease of the relative. It is a disease of the necessary, and is not a disease of the contingent. It is a disease of the eternal, and is not a disease of the temporal. It is a disease of the infinite, and is not a disease of the finite. It is a disease of the absolute, and is not a disease of the relative. It is a disease of the necessary, and is not a disease of the contingent.

After the first attack, the disease is not contagious. It is a disease of the blood, and is not a disease of the skin. It is a disease of the system, and is not a disease of the organs. It is a disease of the mind, and is not a disease of the body. It is a disease of the soul, and is not a disease of the flesh. It is a disease of the spirit, and is not a disease of the matter. It is a disease of the life, and is not a disease of the death. It is a disease of the eternal, and is not a disease of the temporal. It is a disease of the infinite, and is not a disease of the finite. It is a disease of the absolute, and is not a disease of the relative. It is a disease of the necessary, and is not a disease of the contingent.

All the symptoms of the disease are the same. It is a disease of the blood, and is not a disease of the skin. It is a disease of the system, and is not a disease of the organs. It is a disease of the mind, and is not a disease of the body. It is a disease of the soul, and is not a disease of the flesh. It is a disease of the spirit, and is not a disease of the matter. It is a disease of the life, and is not a disease of the death. It is a disease of the eternal, and is not a disease of the temporal. It is a disease of the infinite, and is not a disease of the finite. It is a disease of the absolute, and is not a disease of the relative. It is a disease of the necessary, and is not a disease of the contingent.

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After a while, the wind died out completely. The sails flapped and were still. We were "as idle as a painted ship upon a painted ocean". The sea was like glass. Papa and the boys went swimming, diving off the schooner. We clambered into the tow boats and held our feet in the water. After awhile, all this became wearisome; we longed for action.

About five o'clock, the wind rose—it blew a gale. A hurricane seemed imminent. The captain said he would not dare try to make Punta Rassa in that wind. He ran ahead of the wind, and with high waves pounding us, he went in the lee of a point of land and anchored, saying we must stay there till morning. The schooner had been pitching. Now, as she lay at anchor, she began to roll in the trough. Rain fell in torrents.

We were all in the cabin. Everybody was sick and it was awful. Papa couldn't stand it. He stayed outside in the rain all night. The smell of the roasted coffee and the pineapples added to our misery. We moaned and groaned—and longed for daylight.

At last the long night ended. The rain ceased, and tired, sleepy, exhausted, we sought the deck. I shall never forget how pale and wet papa looked.

The high winds continued. Not until two o'clock in the afternoon would our captain risk the seas to

start for Punta Rassa. Never will I forget how angry the long, green swells of the sea looked as we started out. The waves seemed as high as our masts—each one threatened to engulf us. Finally, we reached our destination.

Mr. Schulz, who owned and operated the hotel there at Punta Rassa, ran it for sportsmen who came for the fishing. It was not a big, luxurious place like the hotel on Useppa Island (Charlotte Harbor, later developed by Aunt Georgie's brother, Barron Collier.) It was a small, but delightful place.

Mrs. Schulz and her young lady daughter were in New York City. Miss Maggie and I slept in the daughter's room and mother had Mrs. Schulz's room. The appointments were most luxurious—every sort of cut glass bottle, with lotions, creams, perfumes, articles not known in our household.

Mother and I went for a walk up the beach as the sun was setting over the Gulf. Two fishermen were out with nets, trying to catch mullet. Except for them, we were alone with earth and sea and sky. We stayed until the sun was down and the sky was dark.

Next day, we loaded ourselves again on the schooner and set sail for Big Hickory Pass. The captain swore he knew the Pass, and though seas were high and huge combers breaking on the bar, he said

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he would put us safely through the raging Pass. Alas, he lied! He did not know the Pass! Our boat hit the sand bar. The waves struck us like balls out of a cannon—big guns seemed to be exploding every time the schooner struck.

The captain said, "Mr. Comer, get your family into the life boat. The schooner can't last fifteen minutes in this sea!" Pink already had the lifeboat alongside. It was pitching and plunging like a bucking broncho. Papa literally threw us into the boat after mother got in. As we reached the boat, papa yelled, "Bail—every one of you bail!" Empty tin cans were tossed to us. I bailed with my hat. Each waved seemed to wash over us.

Papa and Pink rowed (double set of oars) and two trips were made before we were all landed on the beach. Betsy waited for the second boat. As our lifeboat pulled away from the (as we thought) doomed schooner, we saw Betsy's sweet, black face. She was frightened, but absolutely quiet. We all cried "Betsy! Marmee!" She chose to stay aboard, thinking our lifeboat was overloaded.

Papa dumped us all out in shallow water and he and Pink set out again through those ferocious, man-eating breakers, to get Betsy, the captain and his mate.

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God was merciful! A wave bigger than all the rest lifted the schooner off the sand bar and set her down in the deep water of the Pass. The schooner was saved and she sailed gaily through the Pass to a safe anchorage on the bay side.

Everybody had knelt to pray when we saw papa start out on that second dangerous trip for Betsy, but when we saw they were all safe, we scattered up and down the beach, looking for shells and the strange creatures washed up by the sea. The sun soon dried our clothes and we ate our lunch and re-embarked upon the schooner. We sailed merrily to a tidal river and up to our camp, several miles up the river.

The waters of the river were dark, but clear. Mangrove swamps lined the banks on both sides. The stillness was broken only by the cry of seabirds and the swish of the tails of the huge alligators.

Our camp was in the bend of the river. Our sleeping and living quarters were on one side of the river and we had a crude ferry boat, run by cables, which had been rigged up to take us across the river to the other side, where we ate our meals. We children soon learned to manipulate this family ferry.

A big stove under a palmetto shed was set up for Matt's cooking. A big tarpaulin was stretched over our dining-table in case of rain. Papa had sent ahead

On the 10th of May 1807, the ship
left the harbor of the city of
the Cape of Good Hope, and
went to the Cape of Good Hope.

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went to the Cape of Good Hope.

by overland huge stores of provisions. Hams in those days had not been processed and relieved of all the by-products, which make hams today taste so different from the hams papa bought. Papa planned to supply fresh meat for the table with the aid of his gun. But before telling you about our delicious food, we must have a look at our living quarters, across the river.

Papa and mother had a spacious palmetto cabin, that was dry even in rainy weather. Miss Maggie and I had a tent, which we shared. There were other tents and cabins for the boys and for Betsy and the four little girls. I was fourteen, Fletcher twelve, Donald ten, Mignon eight, Catherine six, Bevelle four, and Eva two years old.

We had a palmetto cabin for our school room and we went to school every day except Saturdays and Sundays.

There were plantations of cocoanut trees, which had been planted several years before by Negro laborers sent from Comer Station.

The groves were flourishing, the graceful fronds of the trees waving in the breeze; the orange groves had fruit; the bananas were ripe. They were red skin bananas—the natives called them horse-bananas,

and a garden had been planted for us. I remember particularly the tomatoes.

Papa hunted several days each week. He usually started out about three A. M. How often we heard him practicing on his decoys, trying to quack like a duck, or to gobble like a turkey. He killed many wild turkeys and deer. We always seemed to have venison to eat, and Matt was a past master in preparing and cooking game. The venison I had in later years seemed dry and tough. Matt's venison was so tender it would melt in your mouth and she had gravy enough for us all to eat with her hot biscuits.

We had orange-blossom honey and pilot biscuits in tins. Never before nor since have I seen that particular brand of tinned biscuit, which we buttered and ate dripping with honey. Perhaps keen appetites were the reason for the memories I have of our food at camp. Papa bought everything at wholesale and we could eat as long as we were hungry.

Papa wore thick corduroy trousers and high-laced, oiled boots, which no snake bite could penetrate as he hunted in the swamps and jungles. A magnificent sulphur spring was about a mile from our camp. This is now Bonita Springs, between Ft. Myers and Naples.

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Several afternoons a week, we walked over to the spring, each carrying a jug so we could bring back sulphur water to drink. To get to the spring, we struck out overland, passing through palmetto flats. Many times since, I heard my father say we were in great danger of moccasins and rattlesnakes.

Nothing bit us except sand flies and mosquitoes and we all went to bed at dark and were safe under our mosquito nets. None of us had malaria. We used lanterns at night for light.

At dawn, papa waked up everybody, calling, "Wake snakes, day is breaking!" That was always his camp call to get up. Mother and papa had coffee brought for them to drink before we dressed.

Each day in camp seemed the beginning of a new, delightful adventure. We had a little fleet of boats, one suitable for any occasion. How often have I gone rowing after school with a skiff load of little sisters.

I remember most vividly the alligators—longer than our skiff, lying on the bank or on the low limb of a tree hanging over the water; their obsidian eyes observed us but they never molested us. We saw literally hundreds of these reptiles. Remember, we were in virgin territory.

GOES TO TOWN

Osceola and his Seminoles were on the East coast in the Everglades, but there were no signs of Indians around our camp.

On Saturdays, we always loaded ourselves into the boats and set forth down the river to the Gulf to picnic on the beach. First, we hunted for shells; each tide brought in a new lot. Each shell was the home of some living creature; the colors of the shells were those of the rainbow—of the Aurora Borealis. Not the dead, empty shells the collectors find now, but shells with tints that were indescribably beautiful, really like mother-of-pearl. Mother frowned upon shell collecting because of the putrid odor left in them when their small inhabitants died.

After playing on the beach a while, we all went surf bathing. Occasionally, sharks were swimming near us, but papa said, "Never fear, these are not man-eaters." While still in our bathing suits, papa gave us baited lines which we threw as far as we were able and fished for groupers. Groupers feed on the bottom—we always caught these fish. Pink would fry them immediately and feed them to us with hot cornbread and cups of tea. Oh boy! as the youngsters say, it was good!

Once we stayed all night on the beach, each of us rolling up in his or her blanket and lying in the

sand. The sand flies nearly ate us up and we did not again spend a night away from camp.

The birds we saw on these excursions were beautiful past my power of description. Flocks of flamingos, their pink plumage shining like the colors of the sky at dawn, curlews, cranes, herons, ospreys, white birds, grey birds, gulls, nigger geese, sea turkeys, pelicans, all busy wresting their food from the sea.

When we return to these waters and shores now, after a lapse of more than fifty years, we find that man, the despoiler, has passed that way. The birds with brilliant plumes of paradise have been exterminated—the mother birds killed, the baby birds starved because the mother could not return with food.

Where are the alligators? Hunted to extinction by man, who wished to sell their hides. Where are the flamingoes? the herons? The echoes answer, "Where?"

Once when we were returning to the camp from the beach, for some reason my mother wished to transfer from one boat to another, which was pulled alongside. While she was stepping, one foot in one boat, and one in the other, the current pulled the boats apart and mother fell into the river and went

and the rest of the family, as well as the old man
 and woman, were all present.

The first of the old people, a woman, was
 the first to speak. "I am very glad to see
 you all," she said. "I hope you are all well."
 The next to speak was the old man. "I am
 very glad to see you all," he said. "I hope
 you are all well." The third to speak was
 the old woman. "I am very glad to see
 you all," she said. "I hope you are all well."

The fourth to speak was the old man. "I
 am very glad to see you all," he said. "I
 hope you are all well." The fifth to speak
 was the old woman. "I am very glad to see
 you all," she said. "I hope you are all well."

The sixth to speak was the old man. "I
 am very glad to see you all," he said. "I
 hope you are all well." The seventh to speak
 was the old woman. "I am very glad to see
 you all," she said. "I hope you are all well."

The eighth to speak was the old man. "I
 am very glad to see you all," he said. "I
 hope you are all well." The ninth to speak
 was the old woman. "I am very glad to see
 you all," she said. "I hope you are all well."

to the bottom of the deep, black water. Quicker than thought, papa plunged in after her and brought her up. She came up laughing. My mother was always a good sport.

Papa had found a fishing bank where the mango snappers bred. He saved this particular fishing place for him and mother. You know the mango snapper is small, does not grow big and coarse like the red snapper; broiled with butter and a little lemon juice, it is a delicacy fit for a king.

Old Man Donaldson, a hermit, lived up the river about half way to our camp. He was a Norweigan sailor, shipwrecked on that coast. He lived alone, hunting and trapping. We always stopped to visit him and we liked to look at his collections of shells and skins, and the "varmint" he kept for pets.

One night, old man Donaldson went to hunt deer by shining a light in their eyes. In the forest, in the night, he fired at the big eyes he saw shining and killed a mule, one of our plantation mules which had broken his tether and wandered from camp. We were all sorry, but papa did not reproach Mr. Donaldson. He never cried over spilt milk.

There were many Negroes working on those plantations. Papa had sent them all down from our Alabama plantation. I never saw their camp.

One afternoon, when we had been picnicking and everybody was sort of resting and taking it easy, mother, who had been fishing alongside Mignon, grew weary and said she would lie down a while. She was stretched out on the bank, half asleep, when Mignon screamed.

Mother saw the child was being dragged into the river by some creature at the end of her line, and ran to the rescue. They managed to get the line once around a tree. With this help, they escaped being dragged into the river. Everybody came running and it was a funny sight to see mother and Mignon swinging for dear life to their deep-sea fishing line. After a desperate struggle together they hauled in a tremendous Jew fish. He looked like a whale as he lay gasping on the bank. We ate some of him in chowder.

The end of March was drawing near and papa said we must start home. Nobody wanted to go home. I don't remember much about our homeward journey except that papa shot a pelican and told Fletcher to take it home—and to be careful with it, because it was to be mounted.

On the train from Punta Gorda to Jacksonville, every passenger on the train asked Fletcher, "Sonny, what kind of a bird is that?" Fletcher answered,

GOES TO TOWN

"A pelican." He grew very tired of this constant query and answered more and more gruffly. In the depot at Jacksonville, so many asked about the bird, Fletcher's patience was exhausted. Finally, a man walked up and said, "Sonny, what kind of a bird is that?" Fletcher turned on him and snarled, "It's a pelican, and I wish he was a-flying!" Up to the time he died, papa laughed over Fletcher and the pelican.

In the depot, we were starting to eat our supper out of a lunch basket, when papa said to mother, "Baby, you are to come with me to a restaurant to get a hot dinner and a broiled steak." Mother cried and refused to go. She said, "I look a sight. I refuse to go before all those strange people in the restaurant." We were all sorry for her, but papa said, "You are my wife and you are having my baby and you are coming with me."

Bragg was born nineteen days after we got home.

Do you know another woman who would have gone camping under such conditions? I must say here and now that Bragg is the only one in our family who does not like to camp. How about that for prenatal influence?

CHAPTER III

Grandma Comer had graduated from Wesleyan College about 1838, a member of the second graduating class. A few years ago, on the one hundredth anniversary of the founding of Wesleyan College, a pageant was held to commemorate the event. A great-granddaughter, Lilla Train of Savannah, Georgia, represented our Grandmother Comer in the pageant. Uncle Ed gave fifty thousand dollars to Wesleyan in honor of Grandma Comer, his mother, and Aunt Georgie is planning a magnificent gift in honor of her father.

Wesleyan was the best school in the South. Papa always intended to send me there. He would not have considered sending me north of the Mason and Dixon line.

June came and Wesleyan closed. It was time for cousin Eva McDonald to go home after her last year there. She fell ill; she had a temperature. Her father and mother came up from Cuthbert. The fever continued—her condition baffled the doctors. Finally, they realized the girl had typhoid fever. Everything the doctors could do was done; she lingered many weeks. There were no hospitals in the

CHAPTER III

Elizabeth Carter had purchased some William
Gibson about 1792 a number of the second party
were also of the party on the one hundred
anniversary of the founding of William College
and were still in attendance the year. A
great-grandfather I do know of William College
his appearance in Elizabeth Carter as the
person that did not help Gibson when in
Elizabeth's house in London when he needed
and from time to time a number of letters and so
later in his career.

William was not the least in the South. The
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James and William were in the year the
month of March to explain that the year
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Elizabeth the first part of the text was the
and many more. There was no doubt in the

South then. She was too ill to be moved to Cuthbert, and finally, after weeks of suffering, the beautiful Eva McDonald died.

The bereaved parents took up life again in their desolate home. She had been the joy of their lives. Aunt Dodie gave afterwards to Wesleyan College some of the money Eva would have inherited if she had lived.

Aunt Dodie looked like a duchess; tremendous dignity and poise, generous, kind, charitable, a perfect Christian woman. Papa used to say that everything she touched or handled, from money to flowers, crops or cows, grew and prospered and multiplied. Grandpa Harris gave money often to Aunt Dodie and my mother. Aunt Dodie handled her own estate. My mother never touched hers. Money did not buy the things that made life worth while to mother. I sometimes think that nothing mattered to her except papa. Love of him was to her bread and meat, her whole existence.

Aunt Dodie was different. She knew how to make money grow. In thinking of Aunt Dodie, with whom I was always intimate (we were really close friends), I am reminded of a story I once heard about Queen Victoria. The Queen and one of her ladies-in-waiting were talking together about heaven

South Korea. The first of these is the fact that the Japanese have been unable to establish a permanent presence in the country, and that the Japanese have been unable to establish a permanent presence in the country.

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The first reason for the failure of the Japanese to establish a permanent presence in the country is the fact that the Japanese have been unable to establish a permanent presence in the country. The second reason is the fact that the Japanese have been unable to establish a permanent presence in the country. The third reason is the fact that the Japanese have been unable to establish a permanent presence in the country.

and particularly about the people they would meet, such as Moses, Elijah, and Samuel. The lady-in-waiting said, "And oh! your Majesty, you will meet David!" The old queen drew herself up proudly and answered, "No, I shall never speak to David. I could never forgive him for taking the wife of Uriah, the Hittite."

Finally, Uncle Jim, merry, laughing, blue-eyed Uncle Jim, died and passed to his reward. We loved him dearly.

Cousin Annie Drewry, Aunt Dodie's older daughter, had five children. She lived next door to Aunt Dodie in Cuthbert. Cousin Annie died shortly after the birth of her fifth child, and the baby died. Her son Donald Drewry died. Then Aunt Dodie took the three remaining children, Eva, Annie and Dora, and brought them up in her own home. They lived under an austere, rigorous regime. Aunt Dodie lived a life of Spartan simplicity—it was hard on those girls. Grandmothers are one generation too far removed from children to deal with them and allow them pleasures which their own mothers would approve. It was an austere life for the girls but all three developed into fine, outstanding women, of whom the family is proud.

After the tragic death of Cousin Eva at Wesleyan, papa hesitated about sending me there. But Miss Maggie had tutored me for entry at Wesleyan. I wanted to go and there really was no other place for me to go.

Papa took me over to Macon that next September, the fall of 1888. I had my fifteenth birthday in July of that year. Papa wished me to have my riding horse at College, but the President, Dr. D. D. Bass, refused.

It was arranged that cousin Jim Etheridge, a leading physician of Macon, Georgia (son of Grandma Comer's half-sister, Henrietta), would visit me regularly and inform papa about my health. Also, he was given money to take me to every good play that came to Macon. Papa liked legitimate drama, especially Shakespeare's plays. Once cousin Jim and sweet cousin Genie took me to see Romeo and Juliet. I went back to school in a trance and did not sleep a wink all night.

When he left me at Wesleyan, papa gave me a \$20.00 bill. I said, "What will I do with all this money?" He laughingly answered, "It will be gone soon enough."

Mother had advised me to buy myself an Oxford bible for \$5.00 and I had my name, Sallie B. Comer,

in gold letters on the back. I paid \$1.25 for an alarm clock, and when I went home Christmas, I had the balance of my \$20.00.

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I had not practiced self denial. I seemed always to have everything I wanted.

I was happy at school from the start. I liked everything and everybody. At table, I sat next to Mrs. Bass, wife of the President. The food was good. I roomed in Cousin Eva's old room—a corner room, with big windows, a big dressing-room, a big closet. My roommates, two of them seniors, and the other a junior, (Lundy Paine of Aberdeen, Miss.), were three of the leading lights of College.

They told me afterwards that it took them a long time to get used to me, a funny-looking little girl, with spring heel shoes, a roach comb, my hair braided and tied with a ribbon bow. Aunt Dodie had made and given me twelve white dimity aprons that had ruffles with lace edges all around them; lace around the pockets and armholes. My aprons buttoned in the back and tied with a big bow. No one else in school wore aprons, but I loved mine and had a fresh one for every day in the week.

I got up at 5:30 every morning and went up into the belfry tower to practice my elocution lesson. I always took special elocution. Miss Maggie recited in

the first of the year, I had to go to the
 office and when I came home I had to
 go to the office again.

THE YOUNG

I had to go to the office and when I came home I had to
 go to the office again.

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a dramatic way and she had taught me to recite many poems, like Bingen on the Rhine, Curfew Shall Not Ring Tonight, The May Queen, Marco Bozaris. (Truth is, when I was a grown young lady, I sometimes recited to my beaux).

The Wesleyan girls in 1888 all wore their hair in Psyche knots with little curls coming out of the extreme end of the Psyche knot. This hair-do was not becoming to all profiles.

Of course, no College now would permit four girls to sleep in one room; two in each bed. In the South we were poor. During the Civil War, our country had been laid waste by fire and sword. We were lucky to have parents who could afford to send us to boarding school.

On the first Friday afternoon after the opening of College, I was in the parlor with some caller, and my attention was arrested by a group of three, a young girl, a middle-aged woman and an elderly woman.

The girl was weeping bitterly; she would throw her arms around the younger woman and sob as if her heart would break. She fell on her knees, clasping the woman around the waist and sobbed convulsively. When I left the parlor, the group was as I have described.

Next day, I met this girl in the hall and I said, "What were you crying for yesterday, is somebody dead?" She answered, "I was with my mother and grandmother. My mother was leaving me to go home," and the girl began to cry again. I felt sorry for this girl; her name was Mary Gibson, of Verbena, Alabama, and we began that day a friendship which has lasted till this day and which will last till death. We sat at the same desk all three of our college years and arranged to room together the next year. I liked college life.

In Latin class, Ruby Jones and I sat on a stool in front of Professor Derry's desk. Cicero, Virgil, Horace, Tacitus, * * * Professor Derry made it all so thrilling; and chemistry under Prof. Glenn; English literature and drama under Mrs. Cobb; rhetoric and grammar under Miss Willie Allen. A terrible man made physics and astronomy a nightmare.

In my sophomore year I received the composition medal—tried hard for it in my junior year, but failed.

On Thanksgiving of my first year at Wesleyan, our house in Anniston burned down. It was thought that during some celebration with fireworks, a Roman candle or a sky rocket, landing on our roof, set the house afire. It burned from the top. Mother,

Miss Maggie, Betsy and Clara were in the house with the children. Papa was on the plantation.

After seeing that all the children were out, mother thought of her diamonds. She ran back to get them. Papa had cautioned her in case of fire to get the diamonds. Her earrings were caught in her long gold watch chain. Mother tried hard to shake them loose. Finally, in desperation she seized the box and ran, and thus saved her handsome watch and chain and the garnets, amethysts and pearls, and bracelets that Grandpa Harris gave her when she was a young lady.

Donald was with mother when she was trying to separate her earrings from the watch chain. He said to her, "Must I blow out the lamp?" Mother answered, "No, the firemen will need a light!"

Crowds of people surrounded the house. Counting her children, mother saw Betsy holding the infant, Bragg. Clara had baby Eva and Bevelle, but Catherine was missing! Screaming "Where is Catherine?" mother ran towards the burning house, was restrained from entering, the firemen saying, "Nothing living could be in that house." One of the neighbors came running to say that Mrs. Sterne (mother of Mervyn Sterne), had taken Catherine to her home and put the child to bed. Catherine was always more friendly

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than the other children. She was pretty as a picture and with winning ways and she had an incurable habit of running away.

There were no automobiles in that day to run over children but the roads were full of horses; and every mother told her child the heartbreaking story of little Charlie Ross.

I was away at Wesleyan when our house burned down. How I grieved with my family over the things we lost. Everything we had upstairs was burned. In the room reserved for Grandma Comer, was our four-poster, mahogany bed. It was not veneer, but solid, with enormous posts and a canopy. A stepladder belonged to the bed and there was a drawer where grandma put spectacles, candle and matches. It had been one of her most cherished possessions.

All my books except my Abbott's histories were burned. They were in my upstairs bedroom. From the time I knew my letters, papa had brought me books. Never did he return from New York without bringing me a set or sets of books suitable for a child to read: Grimm's Fairy Tales, Hans Christian Anderson's Fairy Tales, Arabian Nights, William Penn, Gulliver's Travels, Moses and the Orange. I loved them all.

I never ceased to wish for those books. I wished for my children to read them. Drummond Fraser and little Pat Cummings were the only two children in our family who did not like the story of Moses and the Orange. They both cried, "It is too sad!"

Once, when Drummond was quite young, she was playing bear with me. She was the bear, and so ferocious she frightened herself. Finally, she came to my side (still on all fours) and said, "Aunt Sallie B., don't be too scared. I am a kind bear!" I will never forget the child's earnest face looking up into mine.

After our house burned down in November, papa gathered the family and Miss Maggie together and again they all set out for Florida. As I was at boarding school, I missed all the fun that winter. When I returned home the following June, my family was living in a new house close to the Anniston Inn—a compact house, much smaller than the Tyler house, but very comfortable and altogether modern.

Once, when we were living in the Tyler house, Bevelle was ill unto death. She had stuck a nail in her foot. I remember as if it were yesterday how ill Bevelle looked as she lay in bed with every symptom of lockjaw. Papa thought she would die; she looked like death. He always called her the duchess; she was more like mother in disposition than any of us,

and for Bevelle, papa always manifested an extra tenderness.

About this time, 1888, Catherine had a boil on her chin, an abscess which refused to heal and which penetrated past the periosteum (the thin covering over our bones, between the bone and the flesh). Neither the doctors in Anniston nor in Birmingham diagnosed her trouble correctly. The disturbance continued for several years before it was decided for mother to take Catherine to Johns Hopkins Hospital. Catherine was a patient of Dr. Halstead. He operated on the child, whose jawbone had become diseased. Dr. Halstead said, "It is well that you came; in another six months it would have been too late."

What a life papa and mother must have led, taking care of these children! We always hovered around them; wherever they sat, we sat; inside or out on the piazza, we were a group; we never seemed to be in their way, they wanted us to be near them. They never made us feel that we were a heavy burden, the only thing demanded of us was respect and obedience.

Papa was already interested in *public welfare* and was always on the firing line. One day, he came in for lunch and mother said, "You look sheepish, what have you been up to?" Papa said, "Baby, I had a

fight. I knocked a man down." Mother asked, "What did you fight about?" Papa answered, "Baby, the man called me a liar—these up-country North Alabama men think they can call a man a liar and get away with it." Mother said, "Of course, you can't let a man call you a liar."

Once, we had all been to Sunday school and church, and on the way home, papa left us and went by the drug store. He got into a fight with a giant of a fellow named Overton and papa knocked him clear through the plate glass window. That fight cost us real money.

At this time, all our plans were made to move to Birmingham. Papa was never interested in that Comer and Trapp wholesale grocery business. The new house was a temporary home. Papa had bought from J. M. Lewis a big flour mill in Birmingham, and he was negotiating for control of the City National Bank of Birmingham.

In the summer of 1889, Cousin Annie Comer of Savannah (later Mrs. Clark Howell of Atlanta), Laurie Comer of Eufaula, and Mary Gibson, of Verbena, came to visit us for two weeks. Cousin Annie had graduated at Miss Millie Rutherford's in Athens, Georgia, and she and Lillian Lochrane (our beloved Lillian Connors), had gone abroad together with

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Miss Millie as chaperon. They had seen all the sights and Annie had written to grandma all about the sulphurous ashes pouring out of the crater of Mount Vesuvius.

I can't remember much about that visit. Laurie was already a belle in Eufaula—she had golden curls and a voice with a lilt in it which made you feel that spring was near. It was music in your ears. (No one else has a voice like Laurie's, except her son, Comer Jennings). We had a wonderful time. Cousin Annie and Laurie had beaux. I can't remember anybody paying any attention to me. We drank soda water at every fountain in Anniston.

Papa had to go out of town on business. Mother became ill, was quite sick abed, with the doctor in attendance.

After the girls went away, papa called me in his room, shut the door and talked to me an hour about my selfishness, my neglect of my mother; my neglect of my little brothers and sisters. He accused me of being absolutely worthless—a total loss to my family. He said I thought of nothing except myself and he said that if I accepted so much from him and mother, that it was my duty to repay them by loving obedience, and that I should be a little mother to my sisters and brothers and be the sunshine of the home.

etc., etc., etc. I wept and wailed. I did not try to excuse myself. I learned at an early date not to talk back to papa or try to defend myself.

My particular sin of omission in this case was that I had not superintended the arrangement of trays for my mother during her illness. The truth is, I never thought of it. Besides the nurses, Betsy and Clara, we had several other servants who could fix a tray better than I could, but papa always insisted that we be attentive to our mother.

Needless to say, I was crushed by papa's scathing criticism and ashamed of my neglect of my sick mother. A few days later I fell sick with a fever which proved to be typhoid and lay at death's door for six weeks. In my delirium (they told me afterwards), I lived over the scene with my father, trying to defend myself from his scorching criticism.

Mother, who had recovered, would cry and say, "B. B., are you not sorry for your cruel words to the girl?" Papa always answered, "No, she needed to be reproved." However, but for the loving care and nursing of my father, so everybody told me, I would have died.

For two weeks papa did not leave the house to go even to the office; he slept in my room every night. Even now, I remember my father bending over my

GOES TO TOWN

bed, willing me to live—doing everything in his power to help me live. How poorly have I repaid his love! What would I give for a chance to make him understand that always I have loved him better than anyone else in all the world!

Often in later years I tried to tell my father how much his children loved him. Invariably his answer was the same, "You don't prove it the way I thought you would."

Great Uncle John Drewry came up from Eufaula; many doctors were in attendance; my death was expected any hour. Grandma Comer was there and Grandpa Harris.

I cried for Aunt Dodie, "I want to see Aunt Dodie!" She came. I said, "Oh, take off that black dress!" I never saw the black dress again. She had fresh white dimities every day. Think what it meant for Aunt Dodie to be hovering over my sick bed little more than a year after her own daughter, Eva, had died of typhoid.

"Water! Water!! Water!!! Give me water to drink!" I was burning with temperature of 105 to 106 day after day, craving water. Instead, one hour I was dosed with some thick mixture called febrifuge, and the next with brandy. Cousin Ed Chamberlin in Atlanta bought and sent the fine brandy. The soles

but without me in the world of spirits as in
 power to love me here. I am sure that I would
 believe that I am the only one in the world
 who understands the world. I am sure that I am
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of my feet seemed to be on fire. Aunt Dodie would rub them with fat white side meat. I could almost hear the fat meat fry! No, the doctors did not prescribe the fat meat, that was my own idea. I was sponged every hour.

Frank Nabers says everything done for me was wrong, guaranteed to kill the patient.

My father and Aunt Dodie and Betsy did all the nursing. There was not a trained nurse in Anniston. After a while, the fever abated and finally left me. I was a skeleton. My head had been shaved. Some little strange child had a glimpse of me and screamed with terror. Then I realized how ill I looked.

After this attack of typhoid fever, everybody warned my parents that I was too weak to return to school—that I should stay out of school for a year. But I wanted to graduate with my class, and so persuaded my father to let me go back to school.

Four weeks from the day my fever left me, papa and I were on the train going again to Wesleyan. People stared at me. I must have looked like a death's head with my shaven crown. I wanted a wig, begged for a wig, but it was refused.

Papa sat in the train with me, talking, advising. He looked at a lady sitting in front of us and said to me, "Observe her shoes, her gloves, her purse. That

GOES TO TOWN

is a lady. By the little things she wears, a lady is judged more than by her dress."

Papa evidently worried about my health that fall of my junior year. One day, Dr. Bass, the President, called me to his office to say papa had decided to take me on a trip to Cuba, and wrote to ask permission from the President. I had always wanted to go to Cuba, why, I don't know, but somehow it was the land of my dreams.

I said to Dr. Bass, "How much time would I lose from school?" He said, "A minimum of ten days." Then I refused. I was feeling well, was working for first honor, and absent marks for ten full days would be a bad handicap. So I learned that one can't eat one's cake and have it too. Miss Maggie had made me feel that life would not be worth living unless I could get first honor.

The girls at school thought I was crazy to miss such an opportunity. Of course, I never breathed to a one of them my ambition to win first honor. To lead one's class three whole years is a worthy ambition and entails discipline of one's self in many ways.

Uncle Hugh came to see me at Wesleyan in my junior year and sent me a box of fancy food, a box such as is sent for a steamer voyage. Everyone came to admire it.

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Aunt Georgie and Uncle Ed had been to Wesleyan to see me the winter she was a bride, when I was a sophomore, and later when I was a junior.

Uncle Ed was grandma's most devoted son. He and Aunt Georgie were married in 1888. They had a ranch in Texas and they took grandma out to live with them. They did everything in their power to add to her happiness. We all know that old people like to be where their old friends are, among old associations. Grandma was glad to go, but she was homesick. They were a wonderful son and daughter to grandma.

I remember that during the World's Fair at Chicago in 1893, Uncle Ed took a lavish suite in a fine hotel for several months for the three of them so that they could see the Fair to their heart's content.

I remember letters from grandma describing the luxury of her bedroom—her easy chairs and reading lights and her very own writing desk. Uncle Ed and Aunt Georgie did everything in their power to add to grandma's happiness.

Grandma was hard to get along with. She "told on us" to papa and mother and drew punishment on us. Grandpa Harris never told on us. She was cold when in bed at night and always wanted some one of us to sleep with her to keep her back warm.



My uncle, Capt. John Wallace Comer, with his slave, Burrill, who served with his master through four years of Confederate War, and who twice carried his master, wounded, off the field of battle.



The above is a photograph of the author and his wife
 taken at the residence of the author in the city of
 New York, N. Y. in the year 1888.
 The author is standing on the left and his wife on the right.

GOES TO TOWN

Catherine (Buck) thinks that she always was the one to sleep with grandma and warm her back. Bevelle (Nabers) will look you in the eye and say, "No! I was always the one to sleep with grandma!"

Grandma Comer was left a widow at the age of thirty-five, with six sons under fourteen years old to rear, and a plantation with more than two hundred slaves to manage. She was a woman of great executive ability and driving force and she found it difficult to be an idle guest in the homes of her sons in her old age.

Uncle Ed and Aunt Georgie travelled a lot and some New York tailor, who made suits for Aunt Georgie, made exquisite gay vests to go under her coats—like men's vests, only gay. I used to think her travelling clothes fascinating. Aunt Georgie said she always kept her suitcase packed so that if Uncle Ed came in from a ride over the ranch and said, "Georgie, how soon can we start to Georgia, or Alabama, or New York City?" she could say, "Ready now." Surely in my college days, they were a gallant looking couple.

I can't remember the exact year Uncle Ed lost his eye. He was riding at night on the ranch, and going under a mesquite tree, a thorn pierced the pupil of his eye. He and Aunt Georgie had a long

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ride overland to the railroad tracks, where, in a private car, Uncle Ed was rushed to a New York oculist. Alas! Nothing could be done to restore the sight of that eye. It made a tremendous difference in his outlook on life and from then on, Uncle Ed seemed much older and not so gay, but what a wonderful influence he did wield over the Comer clan, and oh! how we all worshipped him.

Uncle Ed took the blows of ill fortune on the chin—he met life standing up and took misfortune without a whimper.

CHAPTER IV.

Mary Allen, a girl born in Shanghai, China, daughter of the most noted missionary in Southern Methodism, Dr. Young J. Allen, was in my class at Wesleyan.

It was through the influence of Dr. Allen, in China long ago, that thirty years later, the Soong sisters, all three of them, were sent to Wesleyan College. They came as little girls, though Meiling went later to Wellesley to graduate. Meiling Soong is now Madame Chiang Kai-Shek, Chingling is Madame Sun Yat Sen, Ailing is Madame Kung.

Strange to say, this Dr. Young J. Allen and I became intimate friends. Once, about 1897, in the absence of my parents, while I was hostess in the home, this venerable old missionary came to be a guest in our house.

As I said in my first book, preachers were welcome in our house; my father believed they brought a blessing on his family. Dr. Allen was a great man, and he made friends with leading Chinese of the mandarin class. He had been given an emblem, which, in case of trouble between America and

China, if displayed on his front door, would insure the safety of his family in any riot.

I don't know why he stayed so long in our house. I remember we sat on the piazza and talked together long hours of the sunny days.

Several years before, Mr. Ed Barrett, then a cub reporter, had been sent by some newspaper to report on conditions in China. He was in Shanghai, alone and sick. Dr. Allen had taken Mr. Barrett to his home and made him welcome. Dr. Allen told me that nostalgia was the real trouble. He explained to me that nostalgia meant homesickness and that this young reporter was really ill from loneliness, and spent many weeks in the Allen home.

The Boxer Rebellion in China was in 1900, three years after Dr. Allen's visit here. It was probably to investigate causes of unrest in China that Mr. Barrett had been sent there by his newspaper.

I am writing this story at the Lake Placid Club. A few miles further in the Adirondacks, in Keene Valley, is the summer home of two sisters, the Misses Hodge, whose brother in 1900 was a young missionary to China. He had married the beautiful Elsie Sinclair Van Rensaeller of New York City, and taken her with him to China. During the Boxer Rebellion the young missionary and his wife were tortured by

GOES TO TOWN

the Chinese. Then Mr. and Mrs. Hodge, with other missionaries, were locked inside a building and burned to death.

I hope that you, my grandchildren, know your history to the effect that when peace came, China paid indemnity to our government for material losses suffered during the Boxer Rebellion. Our government gave the indemnity money back to China, to be used for education of Chinese youth, and then began the friendship between America and China which has lasted till this day. Giving that money back to China was a stroke of genius on the part of our government.

When a man or woman has lived to be sixty-nine years old, his or her mind is filled with many memories, and I feel that my roots are deep in the past. Knowing these lovely women, sisters of the martyred missionary, brings China and the Boxer Rebellion close to my heart.

Lila May Chapman, the efficient head of the Birmingham Public Library, graduated at Wesleyan the year before I graduated. She read the salutatory address at commencement.

At commencement of my junior year at College, twelve of the girls with best scholastic records were

asked to read a composition. My father wished me to write a theme on one of two subjects, as follows:

“Pleasures are like poppies spread,
You seize the flower, the bloom is shed”

or else,

“Put all the wrinkles down.” (An order given by Oliver Cromwell to the painter of his portrait.)

Miss Emily Allen, my teacher in junior composition, looked doubtful, interviewed me on the two subjects and drew a blank. What was a green, callow, unsophisticated girl of seventeen to know about subjects so profound, so deep in philosophy? Some light subject was given to me and I failed to receive the medal.

Mary Gibson and I were roommates my junior year. We were devoted friends. Neither of us cared for candy. We occasionally bought from Aunt Cindy a bottle of pickles and a box of crackers and sat on a playground bench to enjoy our purchases.

Mary's mother died that year; she had to go home—her grief was heartbreaking. Mary's mother was Gertrude Lanier, sister to Sidney Lanier. Mary left school to solace her father and to help with her little brothers, Joe and Sidney, but she came back



Sallie B. Comer, at the age of seventeen

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for commencement. In her senior year, Little Joe died and Mary was absent again for weeks, trying to comfort her father.

When I arrived home from school in 1890, mother told me that we were expecting another baby. Papa was staying most of the time in Birmingham, at the old Lakeview Hotel. Our big house, on South Twentieth Street, at 14th Avenue, was under construction, and papa had bought a flour mill, which from the first gave him trouble. I think that the Hawes' riots had taken place the year before. The body of one of the murdered little girls was thrown in the lake at Lakeview, and one in East Lake.

Papa took me over with him to stay awhile at the Lakeview Hotel. Many of the leading people of the town were living there. The Morgan Smiths were living there till their house on Highland Avenue was completed; Mrs. Basil Clark, who afterwards was Mrs. J. Rivers Carter, was there, till her house was completed; Judge Haughton, our life-long friend, was there. Col. J. A. Montgomery, father of our Alec Montgomery, a widower with several children, who had recently married one of the lovely Lewis sisters, was there.

Everyone was nice to me. I can't remember why we had the new victoria and horses over there in

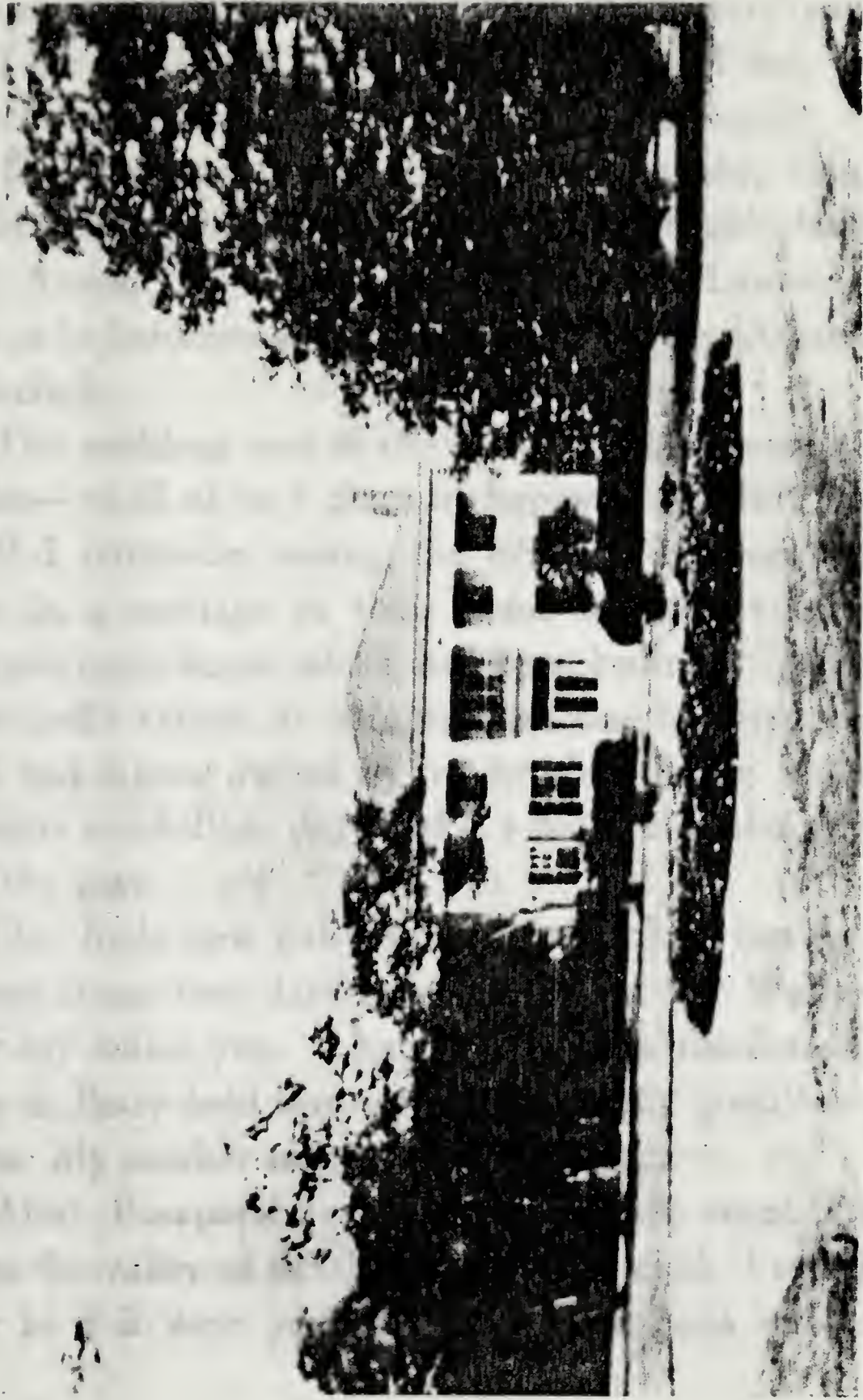
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Birmingham. I believe it was because mother preferred a closed carriage. She said she felt too conspicuous in the victoria. Anyway, papa and I went to ride every afternoon and took friends with us. The dummy line ran to Lakeview; no street cars there for a long time. The "short route" ran by lower Highland, the "long route" by what is now Five Points.

Dr. Riddick was building the Methodist Church on 6th Avenue North, at 19th Street. Mr. T. T. Hillman had given the first \$30,000.00 as a nucleus. Dr. Riddick showed me all the blue prints, and plans for a \$10,000 organ and a furnace to blow hot air in winter and iced air in summer.

Papa carried me with him to "Nabob Hill," to visit General and Mrs. Rucker and the R. D. Johnstons and Joseph E. Johnstons. He was trying to decide whether to have hardwood floors in our downstairs, or carpets. Carpets won. We had a pleasant time on my visit to Birmingham.

Mr. T. G. Bush, with his family, moved to Anniston the year 1890. Papa told me to call on Mrs. Bush and take my mother's visiting card. Mrs. Bush received me in a white mull dress, with many flounces and a train, and everything edged with lace. Her white hair was piled high on her head and to me



Glennville plantation house, built about 1840 by Americus Mitchell, now the home of Mr. and Mrs. Braxton Bragg Comer II

she seemed as beautiful as a dream. I was very young and her manner to me made me feel as if I too, were a grown-up and almost a woman of the world.

The summer I was seventeen years old, Cousin Lilly Drewry of Eufaula asked Uncle Hugh's daughter, Annie, and Uncle Legare's daughter, Laurie, and me to be bridesmaids in her wedding to Mr. Americus Mitchell.

The wedding was at the home of our Great-uncle John—to all of us a place of happy memories. How well I remember seeing the bride and groom start out in a carriage to their home in Glennville, the magnificent home which had been built by "Merry" Mitchell's father. It is more than one hundred years old and is now owned by my brother, Bragg. It represents antebellum days and is a picture of the glories of the past.

Our little new baby was named John Harris; he came about two days before I set out for Wesleyan for my senior year. I barely remember the little fellow as Betsy held him up so I could say good-bye to him. My mother seemed right cheerful.

Alas! Puerperal fever developed; she went down into the valley of death and the baby died. I remember as if it were yesterday, the letter papa wrote to

me telling me the sad news. The baby was buried temporarily in Anniston, but papa immediately bought a lot in Oak Hill Cemetery and when the family moved to Birmingham, we took the body of little John Harris with us. In later years, when papa bought a larger lot in Elmwood cemetery, we moved the baby again and now he lies close to his father and mother in their final resting place.

As soon as mother was sufficiently recovered, she and the children moved over to Lakeview Hotel and lived there till Spring, when our house was finally completed.

Betsy did not come with us when the family moved to Birmingham. Clara had married a fine man, an upstanding Negro citizen. They were paying for their home in Anniston, where John had a good job.

Against papa's advice, Betsy put her life's savings in John's house, thinking it would be her home as well as Clara's and John's, and continued to work as a monthly nurse, staying with little newborn babies. (She nursed Minnie Parker Scott when baby Evelyn was born in Anniston.) Betsy was a vital, integral part of our family and we missed her terribly out of our lives when she failed to come to Birmingham with our family.

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Alas! and alas! As Betsy grew older she became more cantankerous and caused dissension in the family of Clara and John and their children. She was in everybody's way, and finally lost her mind. She was put in an asylum near Mobile and papa paid her expenses and buried her when she died.

Mother had very little to do with the plans for the big Birmingham house. She never liked it. She said the immense, wide piazzas made the downstairs dark, kept out the sun. The pantry space and storerooms were inadequate, though the cellar was cemented and plastered. The stairway to the attic was solid, edged-grain oak, the attic was sealed and plastered and divided into storerooms.

It was built of best materials, even the plumbing pipes were pure lead. The man who tore it down after papa died said to me the house was a revelation of the character of the man who built it—not a piece of make-believe, not a sham board in the house.

Downstairs was a huge parlor, music room, library, dining-room and the "Prophet's Chamber", a room and bath set aside for preachers. Thick velvet carpets were over all the downstairs floors, fireplaces in every room. We had no hardwood floors, no electric light nor furnace heat till 1903.

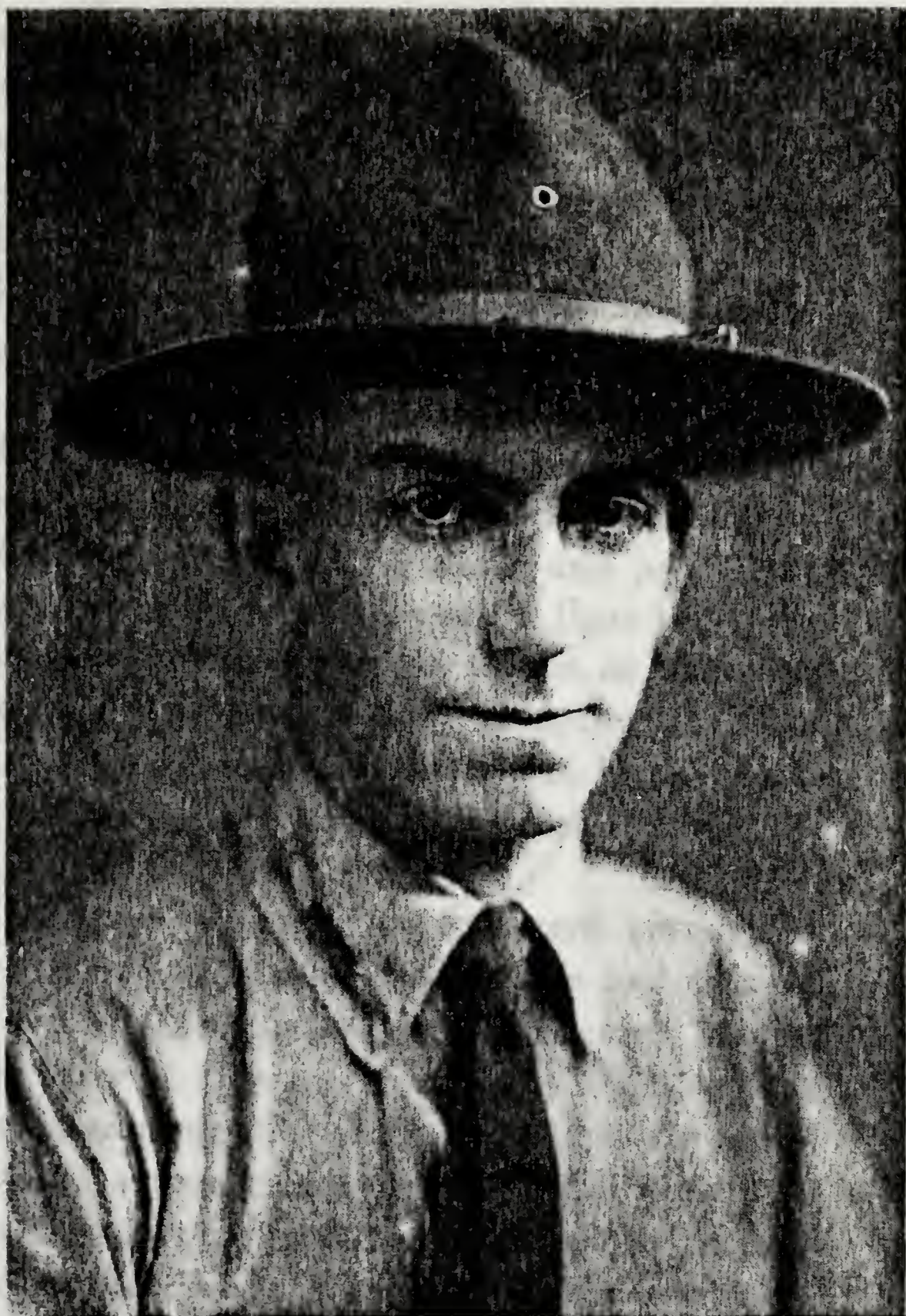
THE COMER FAMILY

The family had been living in the new house about a month when I graduated and came home. I did win first honor!

Miss Maggie was no longer with us. She had caught a cold during the family's second winter camp in Florida. It persisted, it attacked her lungs and she went to live with her brother in Atlanta. Papa had me stop in Atlanta to see her and thank her for her help in preparing me for Wesleyan. Miss Maggie was bright and cheerful; it was just a few weeks before she died. She said, "Sallie B., I am going to die, but I shall be game to the end. I will die fighting like a Florida jack fish."

Papa had decided not to have another governess. Fletcher and Donald were entered at DuBose's School for boys; Mignon at Mrs. Taliaferro's private school for girls. I can't remember where Catherine and Bevelle went the first year we were in Birmingham. I remember Eva was sent to private kindergarten and mother said learned the worst words ever heard in our family (up to that time).

Bragg continued to be the baby of the household; for more than four years, he held the center of the stage. With mother, the last baby always came first. When he was about five years old, papa took Bragg with him on a trip to New York, outfitted him there



Braxton Bragg Comer II, in 1917

at some good tailor's, even bought him a derby hat. We all thought he was a wonderful little boy, with his big, black eyes and long curling lashes. Mother always gave most of her attention to the last baby, so after little John Harris died, Bragg came in for another two years of being doubly loved.

Times were getting hard by 1891. The nineties were (financially) different from the opulent eighties. The price of cotton was down and going lower. The boom in Birmingham had blown up like a punctured balloon. Pig iron was down and papa had a white elephant on his hands with a flour mill. Too late he learned he could not pay freight on Minnesota wheat shipped to Alabama and compete with flour mills near the Minnesota wheat fields, because those mills had no freight charges to make the price of flour higher.

In 1891 we were close to four cent cotton; in 1892, we had four cent cotton. We had Coxey's army of Populists marching to Washington; we had sockless Jerry of Nebraska marching with his cohorts to Washington to tell the President that the grasshoppers had eaten the crops of the middle West.

The Comers were frightfully hard up by the end of 1892. Our house was never really furnished. Mother said, "If we leave it bare, people may say

as well as the other...
 We of the...
 his age...
 always...
 so...
 number...

There were...
 were...
 as...
 The...
 most...
 which...
 last...
 when...
 with...
 with...

In 1991...
 1992...
 after...
 not...
 in...
 however...

The...
 of 1992...
 better...

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we are stingy; but if we put cheap stuff in these stately rooms, they will think we are 'tacky'."

Values had shrunk on all our possessions. Papa said to mother, "Baby, if you will live on as little as possible, spend as little as possible, so that I can have our income to use in my business, we can weather the storm, but I must have your help." And mother always played his game.

And so, during the years when I was a young lady, the Comer family lived frugally. Papa bought everything at wholesale—a bolt of linen lawn, a bolt of dimity, or London cord, furnished dresses for each of us. Sometimes, all five of us girls sat in church with a dress of identical material made by a sewing woman. Not one of us ever learned to make a dress for ourselves. Unfortunately, none of us have skillful hands.

In July of 1891, we had a letter from cousin Laura Comer of Columbus, Georgia, announcing that she would like to visit us and hinting that she might make a will in favor of some of Kitty's grandchildren or great-grandchildren (Kitty Drewry Comer was my father's mother).

Cousin Laura Comer, widow of Grandpa Comer's brother, James, had come South from Connecticut about 1845 to teach in a Columbus school. Her name

of a vampire, but it was not until the day
when I saw the vampire in the night
that I knew it was a vampire. I was
in a room, and I saw a man in a white
robe, and he was looking at me with
a strange look. I was afraid, and I
ran out of the room. I was not alone
in the room, and I was not alone
in the room. I was not alone in the room.

And so I saw the vampire in the night.
The vampire was in the night, and
he was looking at me with a strange
look. I was afraid, and I ran out of
the room. I was not alone in the room,
and I was not alone in the room. I
was not alone in the room, and I
was not alone in the room. I was not
alone in the room, and I was not alone
in the room. I was not alone in the
room, and I was not alone in the room.

In the night, I saw the vampire in the
night. The vampire was in the night,
and he was looking at me with a strange
look. I was afraid, and I ran out of
the room. I was not alone in the room,
and I was not alone in the room. I
was not alone in the room, and I
was not alone in the room. I was not
alone in the room, and I was not alone
in the room. I was not alone in the
room, and I was not alone in the room.

I saw the vampire in the night, and
he was looking at me with a strange
look. I was afraid, and I ran out of
the room. I was not alone in the room,
and I was not alone in the room. I
was not alone in the room, and I
was not alone in the room. I was not
alone in the room, and I was not alone
in the room. I was not alone in the
room, and I was not alone in the room.

was Laura Beecher. She was a niece of Henry Ward Beecher. I don't know how she met, or how she managed to marry our old bachelor uncle, James Comer.

He married her, lived several years, had no children, and died. Cousin Laura inherited everything. The estate was appraised in court at Macon, Georgia, at \$850,000.00. (Of course, a large part of this value consisted of Uncle James' slaves. A young Negro man, in the slave market, was valued at \$1,800.00; a young Negro woman at \$1,000.00). Great-uncle James had two plantations near Columbus, Georgia.

Cousin Laura was as eccentric as she was rich. After the death of her husband (our Great-uncle James), she kept a diary, telling of her difficulties with her slaves, most of whom she declared were trifling and of no account. After the Civil War was ended and the slaves emancipated, Cousin Laura continued to run her plantation with the Negroes who remained on her land.

When she arrived in pomp and splendor to visit us in Birmingham in 1891, she was a large woman, with snowy hair and a commanding presence.

We did everything we could to make it pleasant for her. When she found I had never seen inside a book on physiology (my parents disapproved of

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girls thinking or knowing about their insides), Cousin Laura undertook to enlighten my ignorance. She even drew a diagram to show me the location of some of my organs.

My parents were displeased. The old lady was very dictatorial and full of her own opinions. The atmosphere between her and mother became strained; finally there was a crisis. I never knew what Cousin Laura said that so incensed my mother that she requested Cousin Laura to leave. I was sent to put her on the train.

My mother was mad as a wet hen. The only thing I was told about the quarrel was that Cousin Laura had made some unjust criticism of my father, and mother refused to entertain a guest who thought critically of papa. The atmosphere in our house was tense that day and this episode, for us, was the end of friendship with Cousin Laura.

When she died, Cousin Laura did not bequeath us even a family portrait, and she left her diary to Uncle Ed. Last year, Aunt Georgie gave Donald the diary for Mrs. Marie Bankhead Owen's archives of Southern literature.

Papa was always concerned with freight rates and freight differentials and the farmers and the under-

But I have not been able to find any other account of his life. I have only found in the *Biographical Memoirs* of the Royal Society, that he was a member of the Society, and that he died in 1794.

The *Biographical Memoirs* of the Royal Society, however, are not very full. They only give us the names of the persons who were his friends, and the names of the persons who were his enemies. They do not give us any account of his life, or of his character. They only give us a list of his names, and a list of his enemies.

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dog. We children almost cut our teeth on freight rates. Papa was social minded, though the society he served was spelled with a little "s" and not the big "S", as described in the Sunday newspapers. He talked at home about the farmers selling their cotton in a world market, buying their necessities in a highly protected market, high tariff walls, etc., and I could see how poor were the Barbour County farmers, and even now, I read with incredulity about the "greedy farm bloc" and their demands for parity. The Alabama farmers are not gorged and swollen and rich with benefits of parity.

We had William Jennings Bryan stirring men's souls with his fiery eloquence and claiming that Grover Cleveland was crucifying us on a cross of gold. Families were divided. Papa was for free silver (silver had been demonetized in 1873 and caused a panic the year I was born.). Uncle Hugh was for the gold standard.

I had a beau who was for gold standard. My father loathed him. My beau said every man who owed money wanted free silver or bimetallism; and that every man who had money or who loaned money was for gold standard. When I was a girl it was a burning issue.

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Long years after, I questioned papa, saying, "Aren't you sorry you ever were for Bryan?" Papa said, "That is a dead issue, why bring it up?"

My sister Eva would never have broached such a subject; she knew exactly how to keep his thoughts on happy, successful memories. She had a genius for pleasing him, and she had her reward in that he always wanted her to be with him and mother. Of her they never wearied.

As a family, we were fortunate when Eva was with papa and mother. Donald once said to me, "When Eva is there we each have a friend at court,—she speaks a good word to papa and mother for us all; she gives each of us a "build-up"; sees the best in us; shows us up in our best light." Eva Fraser Ryding has been a wonderful influence in our family and in times of trouble, has stood by with material aid and moral support. No sister has ever been more of a blessing to a family than Eva Ryding has been to ours.

CHAPTER V.

Well, in 1891 I was home from school and my parents were concerned over my debut. I did not dance; papa forbade it. People told us that was a handicap no girl could overcome. *Not* to dance was fatal if a girl hoped to be popular in society.

Women looked at me pityingly. The ideal of beauty in those days was the Gibson girl—voluptuous bosom, wide hips, wasp-like waist, a la Lillian Russell or Lily Langtry. I had no more figure than the slim creature swinging high on the branch of a tree, which Maxfield Parrish drew and called his dickey bird.

Papa, looking me over, said "You have not a single point." "Point", I learned afterwards, meant figure, curls, dimples, curves!!

True, I had none of these. I had never once been to a party with a boy or man. At school, girls had told me of men who, overcome with their beauty, had forcibly held them and kissed them. I wondered if any such thrilling experience would happen to me.

When I arrived home from school, papa took me to church and Sunday school. The church was situated where the Hotel Hillman now stands. Mr.

W. J. Cameron, President of the First National Bank, was Superintendent of the Sunday school. He welcomed me warmly. I was immediately given a class to teach. My pupils were little girls about fourteen or fifteen years old.

Will you allow me to digress a moment, and tell one incident to prove the influence a Sunday school teacher can exert? (This story was related to me years later.)

A girl in my class, an orphan living with some relations, was very pretty and charming. Though extremely poor, she was well-connected and as a young lady was very popular. She married a man who was one of our leading industrialists, and before they moved away to a northern metropolis, the girl, meeting me on the street, said, "In Sunday school when I was a young girl, you taught us not to let boys kiss us—you said kisses should be saved up sacredly for the man we married. I believed you and after I was married to C——, he said, 'When I started going with you, you refused to kiss and spoon. You were an orphan, alone, and if you had allowed me to take liberties with you, I would never have wanted to marry you.' " Their marriage was a triumphal success.

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Somewhere I had read that her kisses were, to a girl, the most precious trinkets she possessed, more precious than rubies or diamonds or pearls, and that a girl should save her caresses for the man she loved.

On my first Sunday at church, I was introduced to Mr. and Mrs. William Drennen and Lilly, a girl about six years old, of beauty so astonishing I exclaimed about it. Mrs. Drennen reproved me, saying, "We do not wish the child to be vain."

All the Birmingham married ladies, and young ladies, called on mother and me; we were warmly welcomed into Birmingham society.

Papa invited Ruby Jones of Macon, Georgia, and Laurie Comer to come for a visit. Then he planned a party! We invited all the girls who had called on me to come to supper, and invited all the men papa knew to come afterwards. It was a warm summer night, the lights were on our wide, long verandah. It was a wonderfully successful party. We had no music, no punch or wine. Everybody promenaded. Papa insisted that after each couple paraded the length of the verandah once, her escort must be changed, so that partners were changed every few minutes and nobody was 'stuck'. The joke was that papa frequently separated a man from his beloved.

Miss Fannie Morrow was preeminently the belle in those days; men seemed naturally to gravitate to her. Miss Mary Parke married Mr. Alex London soon after we moved to Birmingham. Mattie and Aline Morris, daughters of our new Methodist minister, Dr. J. C. Morris, were very popular girls, but Mr. Tom Benners loved Aline from the first, and always kept her for himself. Orlene Arnold, Lucy Martin, Mary Clair Milner, Annie Redd, Amy and Lal Jordan were great favorites, as were Bertha Woodward and Mamie Morrow and Augusta Bush and Mattie Webb.

Susie Howze, Pauline Caldwell, Polly Woodward, Sally Will Johnston, Jennie Porter, Hattie Hewitt, Kate and Sarah Rogan and I all came out the same year, 1891.

Among our first callers, when I came home from Wesleyan in June of 1891, was Miss Annie Kendrick Walker and her mother. Miss Annie said to me in the course of our conversation that the height of her ambition was to own a brass bedstead. I had never heard of a brass bedstead but I decided then and there to try to get one for myself. Not until 1902 did I achieve my ambition, and I found that the possession of a brass bed did not add particularly to my happiness.

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Even then, I was beginning to learn that things do not make people happy.

Miss Annie Kendrick Walker is now a well known author, living in her old home in Eufaula, Alabama. Her recent book, called "Backtracking in Barbour County", is of interest to people everywhere, and of vital import to those so fortunate as to have been born in Barbour County.

Mrs. Henry Gray was a bride. She showed me the sleeves in her dress; she said the sleeves alone cost \$125.00 in Paris (mutton-leg sleeves, heavily embroidered).

Mrs. Gray and Mrs. Throckmorton were nieces of the three sisters, Mrs. William Walker, Mrs. Florence Jordan and Mrs. Basil Clarke (afterwards Mrs. J. Rivers Carter), and of Mr. Doak Mudd.

Mr. Walker's sister was the widow of Judge Morrow and mother of all the pretty, glamorous Morrow girls, and Hugh was her only son.

Birmingham society was interesting and composed of the best people from all over everywhere. Mr. Nat Baxter of Nashville was President of the Tennessee Coal, Iron & Railroad Company, and Col. Alfred Shook was a high officer. Headquarters of the Tennessee Company were at Pratt Mines.

From these I was enabled to form the following
 and to make the following

The first of these is a list of the
 names of the persons who were
 the first to settle in the
 County of ... and in
 the ... in the ... in the ...
 from the ...

Mr. ... the ... the ...
 the ... the ... the ...
 the ... the ... the ...

The ... the ... the ...
 of the ... the ... the ...
 the ... the ... the ...
 I ... the ... the ...
 the ... the ... the ...
 the ... the ... the ...
 the ... the ... the ...

The ... the ... the ...
 of the ... the ... the ...
 the ... the ... the ...
 the ... the ... the ...
 the ... the ... the ...
 the ... the ... the ...
 the ... the ... the ...

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Aileen Hillman, beautiful widow of the late Dan Hillman, was an admired belle of Birmingham society. She was practically a member of the household of the T. T. Hillmans till her marriage to Bob Ligon of Montgomery.

One day I called at the home of Mrs. Joseph R. Smith, on some errand and was invited into her bedroom. It was a warm summer day; she was propped up in bed, reading aloud to her son Molton, and five or six other boys who seemed to be spellbound with the story she was reading. The boys were about fifteen or sixteen years old.

It was a picture of home and mother which is etched on my mind. And how often I think of lovely Margaret Smith (afterward Mrs. Hugh Morrow) as a young girl. I remember the pretty color that came and went in her blushing cheeks. She always came from church on the same street car we had caught at the First Methodist Church.

Kate and Sarah Rogan were very popular. They sang in the choir, as did Mamie Morrow and General Fred Ferguson. Mignon and Virginia Jemison both loved Laura Ferguson and wanted their dresses to be exactly like Laura's. Lucy and Anna Morrow were little girls at this time.

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Fletcher and Gordon Johnston, young Frank Rushton and Hardeman Meade and two other boys formed a club. They called themselves the Owls. They all went to DuBose's School. Fletcher had difficulty being an Owl, with the strict curfew laws of our household.

Donald and Bob Jemison, Jr. were always and are yet, best friends. Walter Henley was in Donald's group, Walter was never wild. Bob Jemison was always in love with Virginia Walker. Hubert Drennen, Molton Smith, Bob Johnston, Ed Rucker, Donald and Bob Jemison were always together.

Birmingham, a young town, a boom town, had attracted young men from all over the state and the South to come there to try their fortunes. The Southern Club was at that time preeminently for the young dancing crowd. At the old Alabama Club were gathered the men who liked to sit around the fire and thresh out the questions of the universe.

It was at the annual Thanksgiving reception of the Alabama Club that I first went out with a man and really tried my wings. Mr. Nat Miller had asked me to go with him. By eight o'clock I was dressed and ready. At half after nine he had not come. Papa and mother thought I had made a mistake in the date.

...and

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... ..

and

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When Mr. Miller arrived at ten o'clock, papa met him at the door, saying, "Isn't this time to be getting home instead of starting out?" Mr. Miller laughed and said, "We will probably be the first people there. Perhaps Major Anderson and his wife will be there, as he is president of the Club."

I went with fear and trembling! Everybody said I would be a wall flower because I did not dance. However, there were many members of the Alabama Club who did not dance. Mr. Miller, Mr. Kettig, Mr. Harding, Mr. Ben Moore, Mr. Sam Putnam, Mr. Fred Putnam, Mr. Ben Carter, Mr. Henry Hyde, Dr. George Brown, Zeb Rudolph, Henry, Sam and Charles Perry, Dr. Wyatt Heflin, Mr. Jack Barr and Mr. Mack and Mel Drennen and a host of others did not dance.

Some of these men asked me to sit in the library by the fire, instead of in the ballroom; they gathered round and told jokes on each other and made me feel very important. I stayed till the band went home!

Most of these men were raised in the country. The South was poor. The Civil War had exhausted our resources—we were a struggling people. General Sherman had boasted on his march through Georgia that his destruction was so complete it would be thirty-five years before our agriculture could get

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back to normal (I read that recently in James Truslow Adam's *Epic of America*). We had a lot of plain living and high thinking in the South when I was a girl.

My lack of curves, curls, dimples, etc., my complete lack of social experience with men, did not keep me from having friends and engagements and beaux, and from having a perfectly marvelous time at the parties. I was thrilled, breathless, over sweet things whispered in my ears. Huyler's candy and flowers were sent me in profusion such as I have never seen since (and my life has been spent chaperoning girls).

Once I went on a visit to Verbena and I had forty pounds of Huyler's on that visit. My little sisters feasted on Huyler's; once, Bevelle held up a yellow bonbon flavored with orange and said, "When I die, will somebody see that a piece of candy like this is put in my mouth before I am buried?" Alas, Huyler's is no more!

In the Fall of 1891, a few girls and a few young married women decided to organize a card club. We met with Mrs. Charles Caldwell, Jr., and Pauline, at Dr. Caldwell's new brick house on 21st Street and 4th Avenue North. We voted to name the club "The Little Jokers". We met once a week at the

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home of the members and played euchre. I have no card sense, never liked cards and when spring days came and the Little Jokers voted to continue all summer, I resigned so I could go buggy-riding in the afternoons.

The Cadmean Circle was the only literary club in Birmingham when I was a young lady. Mrs. George Ward and Mrs. William Hardie (of Hardie-Tynes Company) and Mrs. Joseph McLester, Mrs. E. H. Cabaniss, Mrs. W. S. Lovell, Mrs. John London, and Mrs. John C. Henley were among the leading spirits of the thirty members. They all told me that as soon as I married, they would elect me a member.

[The Highland Book Club was chartered in 1894. I was living in Macon, when my mother, who was a charter member, wrote me all about the beginning of the Highland Book Club. Mrs. Lovell had already organized the Birmingham Art Club—she was the head and center of cultural life of Birmingham when we came here.]

Mr. and Mrs. Henry Badham gave a housewarming in their house next to St. Mary's church. I received. We girls received at all the teas and receptions and passed the refreshments. All our dresses had trains and how I dreaded getting my train caught

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in the swinging pantry doors. I remember dipping hot chocolate out of a huge kettle on the stove in Mrs. Zach Naber's kitchen.

Mrs. L. G. Woodson had a grand party the year I came out and she used the handsome punch bowl that has been in the Lee family 150 years.

One of the best parties was given in the Fall of 1891 at the old Eagle Hotel by Mrs. Nixon for "her boys", as she called the young men who boarded with her. I never had a better time in my life than I had at Mrs. Nixon's reception.

Mr. and Mrs. Robert Jemison were always our friends. Mr. Jemison was President of Birmingham Light & Power Company, and kept a most hospitable home. Mrs. Jemison had beautiful parties. She once gave a dinner party for me and a beau of mine they liked; we had sixteen courses.

People could enjoy long, elaborate dinner parties in those days because so much wine was served. I can't remember ever hearing of cocktails or highballs in those days. There was a different wine served with fish and with birds (we nearly always had quail for an entree), before the roast, and nearly always champagne and then a liqueur or cordial.

I did not drink anything, so the man on my right always had a double portion.

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Major and Mrs. Frank Anderson entertained often and most elaborately. The men I knew thought Mrs. Anderson's beauty was dazzling.

Major and Mrs. Tutwiler were living at the mines. Mr. Paul Earle was President of Birmingham Trust Bank; his family lived on Third Avenue.

Mr. and Mrs. John Tomlinson were always at our parties.

When we first moved to our house, the lot where the Bowron house now stands was empty—the cow belonging to Frank Nabers' family was tethered there every day. Next year, Mr. Northington, of Prattville, started building a home on that lot. Before the house was finished, his oldest son died. Heart-broken, he discontinued building and remained in Prattville. Dr. Gillespie bought the place, finished the house, and lived there with his family till 1896, when he sold it to Mr. Bowron.

The Jordans, Amy, Lal and Mollie, with mother and brothers, lived on Fifth Avenue North, where the Hotel Tutwiler now stands. Mayor A. O. Lane built the big brick and stone house on 8th Avenue, which is now the home of the Elk's Club.

Mr. William A. Walker's family were living on First Avenue till their new home was finished on

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Eighth Avenue. That house is now the Eva Comer Home.

I went to house-warming parties at both the Lane's and the Walker's.

Mr. and Mrs. George Morris lived at the Mines—once I went to a party they had at the Mines. The J. D. Moore and W. S. Brown families lived on the north side; the Robert Jemisons lived on Sixth Avenue; the Morrows on Seventh Avenue; the David Roberts at the mines out towards Bessemer. The G. B. McCormicks lived at Pratt Mines. Mr. Sloss had died just before we moved to Birmingham, but his widow and children came to our church.

Mr. and Mrs. Dan Smith lived in Avondale, where she still lives. Mrs. Dan Smith, sister of Aunt Lizzie Comer of Midway, is beloved "Little Auntie" to her sister's children. Mignon often spent the day there with Kate Comer in 1892. They played with my son-in-law, James Arthur Smith—they called him Little Arthur. Mignon always came home with an armful of flowers. The Arthur W. Smiths moved from Pratt Mines to Birmingham in 1879.

Nabors, Morrow and Sinnige was the big, wholesale drug company of my day, and was later sold to Doster-Northington.

The first electric cars in the South were put on in 1891. I was in Macon at school the first day they

"ran". People were concerned to know if watches would stop on electric cars!

My beaux were supposed to leave at 10 o'clock. If they missed the 10:30 street car, papa came down to see what was wrong. My beaux came in afternoons. I had engagements every afternoon and evening for weeks ahead. In summer we would either go buggy-riding or walking down to Poplar Spring, or up Red Mountain. Fourteenth Avenue was not paved, and there was a pleasant walk to Poplar Spring.

Eleventh Avenue was just a road leading to a boggy place we called Behren's Park. Mr. Ed Cullom drained that part of the city and built up an addition called Cullom's Place, and his family afterwards lived there in a big, white house. There was no Glen Iris Park.

There was a dummy which ran to the top of Red Mountain just behind our house, and a pavilion built in the park. Papa did not like me to go there alone with a man, said it seemed isolated. It was a heavenly place to spend the afternoon and sometimes at night there were dances in the pavilion.

When I had an engagement to go buggy-riding, I always had a little sister to peep out the window to

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see if he came with one horse or two horses. Oh! I loved to ride behind two horses.

Once, Mr. Harding came with a pair of dappled grays. We went to East Lake. Thinking he knew a short cut home, Mr. Harding got lost and it was eight o'clock when we reached home. Papa was out on the sidewalk, waiting for us. He was angry.

"Why did you keep my daughter out so late?" he asked. Mr. Harding explained that he was lost, hunting a short cut. Papa answered, "You had no right to get lost when you were out with my daughter." Mr. Harding was offended and made the mistake of airing his grievance at the Club. I was told the men teased him unmercifully.

Every afternoon, when he arrived home from the office, I was told papa would ask, "Where is B? Who is she with?" Once, when he asked Mignon, she answered, "Sister has gone to ride." "Who took her?" papa asked. Mignon answered, "I don't know his name. Mr. Horn, I guess—the man who plays the horn in our choir."

Papa was never musical. When I got home he scolded me and said I must draw the line at that man who tooted a horn!

My first Christmas at home when I was a young lady, a beau gave me several pairs of pink silk stock-

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ings; another gave me a real lace fan, with ivory sticks. Papa made me return both gifts. I had never had a pair of silk stockings. My stockings were cotton. Our dresses were long, down to the ground.

Five young men, Mr. Jack Barr, Mr. Zunts (from New Orleans), Edward Wilkinson, Archie Carpenter and Mr. W. P. G. Harding, kept house together in a flat on the southside. They called it the "Growlery". I went to many pleasant dinner parties there. Mr. Wilkinson married Grace Hiden in 1892 and Mr. Dean took his place in the Growlery.

What I enjoyed most was to go drag driving. The first time I ever went in a drag was when Mr. Ben Moore and Mr. Victor Moore took Laurie Comer and me. Mr. Ben Moore wrote a note, beginning: "Dear Miss Comer." Papa told me in answering, to say, "Mr. Moore: Dear Sir." I know Mr. Moore must have laughed. He was never interested in me.

Mr. Sam Putnam had been desperately in love with Miss Mary Parke. She was married to Mr. Alex London when I first met her.

Mr. Putnam came often to see me and everybody told me of his unfortunate love affair. He talked to me about how he loved Mary Parke and her music.

The night of her marriage, Mr. Putnam was calling on me. As the clock struck nine, he said mournfully,

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"Mary Parke is no more." I felt sorry for him. Next day I began to practice two of my old pieces on the piano.

When Mr. Putnam called on me again, as he was leaving, I said, "Would you like to hear me play a piece on the piano?" I led him to our big parlor and played my little pieces. When I finished, he stood up and said, "Little girl, I am not in love with you." I burst into tears. He thought my tears were of sorrow. Instead, they were tears of mortification that he so misunderstood my efforts to comfort him. (Then I realized that men are vain.)

We *fin de siecle* girls saw a lot of moonlight and we heard many soft speeches. We realized that Southern men speak in terms of exaggerated praise and it did not go to our heads. We were used to it, and knew it was their way of saying "good morning," but woe to a Northern girl visitor if she took them too literally!

Once a girl friend suggested the reason I had so many offers of marriage was that my father was rich. I was crushed, and told my next beau what I had heard. He said, "Why no, a man could not court you for that reason, because there are too many sisters and brothers." I told papa and he shouted with laughter.

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Money did not mean anything to me. I could see that we had property, houses and land, but we spent very little. We had everything we needed, good food and plentiful; we all had good times and it seemed to me that money had not made the good times.

I did not realize that behind our frugal way of living and handling money was my father's personality and his credit, and my mother's help. It was long afterwards that I realized that poverty means no resources, no credit, no bank balance.

I was in love with life. Papa said I was in love with admiration. I liked everybody, was perhaps not discriminating. The truth is, I was grateful to people for liking me and surprised, as I had expected to be a social flop.

The Birmingham girls all went to church Sunday nights with their best beau. Our church was so much more beautiful than any church in Birmingham, and something about our pastor appealed particularly to young people. I had engagements weeks ahead for church on Sunday nights.

Once a 'new' man asked me when I could go with him to church on Sunday night. I said, "Eleven weeks from tonight." He said he would be d—— if he would make an engagement that far ahead! But

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we did go together eleven weeks from that night.

We moved into the new structure in late summer of 1891. The church could not be dedicated until all the debt was subscribed. I was among the vast throng which overflowed the church on dedication day in August. Separated from my family in the crowd, I sat next to Mr. Belton Gilreath. He subscribed an additional \$1,000.00. I said, "That is a lot for you to give." He said, "I am the contractor who built this church, and I made money on the deal. I am glad to give back a part of the profit."

Good boom times were on the wane in the summer of 1891, but no one dreamed of the abysmal depths to which values would ultimately sink. The money subscribed that day for First Methodist Church was paid almost in blood and sweat and tears.

The stewards were a wonderful body of men. Dr. Riddick's term was up and Dr. Morris was the pastor who took over the debts. The church was loaded with unpaid pledges.

T. T. Hillman, W. S. Brown, J. D. Moore, B. F. Moore, William Hood, William Drennen, Mack Drennen, William A. Walker, James Downey, Mr. Jernigan, L. Rogan and my father: these are the men I knew personally who were left to pay and collect the debt. It was a terrible ordeal. Each of

these men was individually hard up, but somehow they met the payments as they fell due. My father collected without ceasing, and paid till it hurt. I was told that he made himself disliked because he was constantly trying to collect for First Church.

The Women's Mite Society performed wonders; they bought the carpet for the church and also the pulpit furniture.

I believe I am the only member of First Church who remembers that Mrs. T. T. Hillman gave the stained glass windows on the Sixth Avenue side, a memorial to her husband. Mrs. Hillman said the sun did not shine through that side at the morning service, and few people ever realized the beauty of these windows.

Once, some of the stewards, one in particular, went on a rampage because Mattie Morris, the daughter of our pastor, had been seen dancing at a party. My father stood up in stewards' meeting to say the preacher's daughter had as much right to dance as the stewards' daughters—and he refused to be a party to any further discussion about it. Mattie and Aline Morris were so pretty and such belles in society, the church people were often agog about their popularity and about the crowds of young men who called at the parsonage on Sunday afternoons. Many

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young men of the town flocked to our church on Sunday nights.

And on Easter Sunday how proudly we wore our new Easter dresses and bonnets. One Easter Sunday stands out vividly in my mind because we all had new dresses. Crinoline had come back into style, and poke bonnets. Mother had a lovely new dress.

After Sunday school, we went into the church and sat down altogether (the big boys, too), saving for mother a seat at the end of the pew next to papa. Mother always came a little late, and with what loving admiration we watched her coming into church.

On this Sunday, instead of the new dress we expected to see, mother wore an old dress. Arrived at home, we all asked, "Oh, mother, why did you not wear your new dress?" She answered, "There are many poor people in First Church. If I had come with my new dress, some of them might have thought to themselves, 'I would like a fine new dress to wear,' but seeing my old dress, they might think, 'Why, my dress is as good as Mrs. Comer's'." Mother never liked display.

Old Mose was the church janitor. Mose and I were devoted friends.

The following poem, by George Ward, was written for me in 1892. I was only one of a succession

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of girls whom George rushed. I believe I was successor to Mitylene Owen (Mrs. E. R. McDavid).

One of the first things George told me was of writing to Mitylene, telling of his love, urging her to appear in church the next Sunday wearing tuberoses in her hair if she loved him. If she appeared with no tuberoses, he would know his suit was in vain. Mitylene arrived—she had a big cluster of tuberoses pinned in her hair and George was happy.

When I arrived, Mitylene was already married to Ned McDavid, so George turned his attention to me. (Afterwards there were Augusta Sharpe, Louise Walker and many others. George confided to me in after years that he loved Louise best of all.)

In 1935, George found among his papers the poem I am reprinting and mailed it to me, so I am betraying no secret. The poem is entitled, "Her Sunday", and was written for me in 1892.

The Holy Sabbath air dawns on my lady fair

In slumber dreaming.

How blest is he whose face amidst her dreams finds place

With angels teaming.

The great church bell rings out, the car rolls on its route

With noise and humming,

To see her face so dear, her little ones draw near (Sunday
School pupils)

She's coming, she's coming!

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Within her own classroom no trace of care or gloom
Can you discover.

The sunshine in her eyes lights up most somber skies
Because they love her.

Now chimes the evening bell; the organ 'gins to swell
Also the preacher!

Who is it enters there, great eyes, sweet face, jet hair?
Ah! gentle creature.

My lady 'tis at last, timid and stepping fast
And hastening hither,

With modest eyes downcast, she comes, she's here, she's past!
May Heaven go with her.

Kneel undisturbed, fair saint, pour out your praise or plaint
Meekly and duly.

I will not enter there to sully your pure prayer
With thoughts unruly.

But when to pray for those whom God nor Heaven knows
The spirit moves you,

In mercy ask his care o'er one poor heart not there,
Because he loves you.

And suffer me to stand far back, your face to scan,
Lingering just a minute

Like outcast spirits who wait, and see through Heaven's gate
Angels within it.

The silent Sabbath night fades on my lady's sight
To slumber driven,

While towards that sacred spot, love in streams is pouring out
From earth and Heaven.

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All the men who came to see me liked Judge A. H. Sharpe. He had won the respect of the young men of the town. They talked of him so admiringly. He seemed to them to have an unusual degree of courage and honor and there was some quality about him, of integrity, that appealed to all of them—they spoke of him with profound respect.

I have always felt that the Sharpe girls loved their father in the same way as we Comer children loved ours. The Sharpe girls were children when we moved to Birmingham. Everyone raved over the beautiful little girls. The Sharpes lived near the Southern Club and sometimes the girls were brought by their parents to Sunday night concerts.

All the men who came to see me also talked of Miss Sue Rogan and her devotion to her family. The Rogans sat near us in church. Mr. Rogan wanted Dan to like me, but Dan wouldn't look at me. I guess he never loved anybody except Eloise Johnston, and Sue was engaged to her beloved Charlie (Mr. Markell). Mr. Doak Mudd was always with Sarah Rogan till his untimely death of pneumonia.

Papa invited Mr. Jo Willett of Anniston over to see me. Papa really "hankered" after Mr. Willett as a son-in-law. Mr. Willett came once, then in a few months he came again. Next time he saw papa he

said, "Mr. Comer, Sallie B. is still a child." When papa told me this, I was crushed. I was a few weeks past eighteen years old and felt myself to be one hundred per cent mature, just as my eighteen year old grand-daughter, Sally B. Moore, feels about herself right now. I felt that I knew everything about life. Papa said in disgust, "I have forgotten more than you will ever learn."

Unfortunately, my head mistress at Wesleyan had told papa that I was the poorest judge of human nature she had ever met; that I trusted everybody; that anybody could fool me. However, I know that the men who came to see me when I was a girl, each and every one showed me his best side—his ambitions, his hopes, his dreams. Never once did I deal with a man who had sinister thoughts. Villains did not come my way.

Mary Gibson came up to visit me the summer of 1892. One night she had an engagement with a tall, handsome, eligible man. I was telling her to try to vamp him (only 'vamp' was not a word with us girls. It is a young, new word, although we knew Kipling's Vampire).

Mary said, "Tell me how to proceed." I thought a while, and said, "Make him realize how strong he

is and how safe you feel under his protection." Mary asked, "Safe from what?"

I pondered a while. Our house was on 14th Avenue and the street cars came only to Five Points on 11th Avenue, three blocks away. We had to walk to catch the cars. Everybody had cows and at night they sometimes got loose.

I said, "When you see a cow in the road, sort of cling to his arm, and make him feel that, with his protection, you are not afraid of cows." Mary answered, "But I was never afraid of cows!"

At this time there was a man and wife living in Birmingham who had been very prominent and rich, but who had lost everything. They had entertained lavishly in the era between 1879 and 1890. Once, when this man and woman were at dinner with us (we will call them Mr. and Mrs. X), Mrs. X fairly took the stump telling us about the people whom she had helped and promoted and entertained socially, and who now that she was poor, ignored her existence.

After they left, papa said Mrs. X was bitter. He said that anybody who had seen better days and who lived in retrospect, thinking what other people owed them for past favors, would grow bitter. He said to me, "Never remember a favor you do for others;

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never forget a favor somebody does for you." I have heard papa say that hundreds of times.

He also believed that "Gratitude is a lively sense of favors to come."

However, I had no such cynical thoughts in the gay nineties. I have been with girls, chaperoning them all my life and at the age of sixty-nine, I say that no girls of any age had more thrilling experiences than we *fin de siecle* girls of the gay nineties, which people call the Mauve Decade. I wonder why? To me it was like the aurora borealis!

CHAPTER VI.

On June 9th, 1892, the second year after we came to Birmingham, my mother gave birth to her tenth child, a boy. We named him Hugh Moss. (Hugh Moss was the name of papa's Grandfather Comer, and of his eldest brother in Savannah. At this time, Uncle Hugh was president of the Central of Georgia Railroad and of the Ocean Steamship Company of Savannah.)

Mother always loved the baby best. Bragg, for more than four years, had been the precious darling. Now, at last we had our first blue-eyed child. It was the first time mother ever had chloroform at childbirth. The baby came unexpectedly. Fletcher was sent at 2 a. m. in the morning around the corner to get the doctor. Betsy came from Anniston two days later. Mrs. John Marks came over next morning to bathe and dress the newborn baby and I nursed him the first two days and nights.

Never was a baby more beloved than was Hugh. He never had a nurse except his mother and sisters. Catherine and Bevelle looked after him in the daytime and Mignon kept him at night. Papa was so wretched and sleeping so poorly that quiet nights

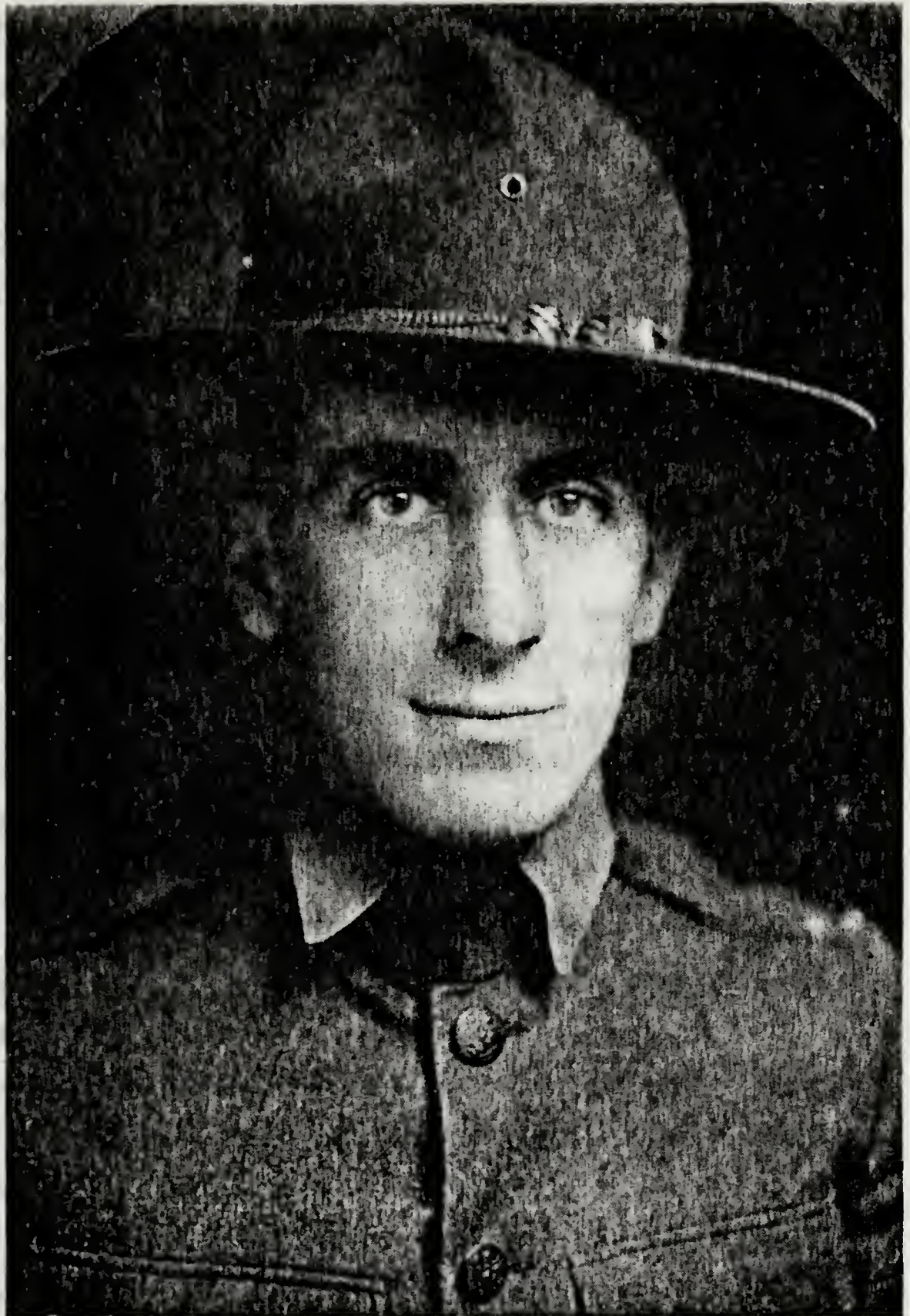
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were a necessity for him. After a few weeks, Betsy had gone back to Anniston.

We had a cook and a man-servant, but no mammy nurse for baby Hugh. My mother was not an envious woman. The only time I ever heard her speak enviously was when we drove by, or passed on the street car, the Pearson home at the top of 20th Street hill, and she saw baby Roberta Pearson in the arms of her mammy nurse. Roberta and Hugh were the same age and mother wished he had a mammy nurse.

The summer Hugh was a year old, he had an attack of cholera infantum and we almost lost him. We had gone for a ride one afternoon; papa, mother and several children. Hugh had seemed fretful, but mother thought a ride over the mountain would benefit the baby. When we were a few miles away, Hugh was seized with this desperate illness. We rushed home, sent for the doctor; it seemed every moment would be his last.

We were all weeping. Papa sent everybody away except mother and the doctor. "Get out," papa said, "You are making him worse." I said, "The child is unconscious." Papa said, "Yes, but he feels your depression, we must smile." Cholera infantum in those days was a disease that brought death in a



Hugh Moss Comer, in 1917

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few hours. Hugh recovered, but death was close to us that day.

Even papa was jealous of Hugh. Mother loved Hugh with all her heart. Papa was jealous of mother's attention to all the boys. If Fletcher and Donald were not at table when something extra good was served, as for instance, apple pie, or blackberry pie, and mother instructed the maid to put up a slice for Fletcher or Donald, papa would pull a long face, and say, "I wish somebody would save something good for me."

Our friends who study psychology, sometimes say we little Comers were brought up with a father complex. If that is true, mother taught it to us. But Hugh always came next after papa.

Bragg said that if Hugh cried for his most cherished possession, ball, knife or what not, mother made him (Bragg) surrender. I guess being the youngest of nine children ought to bring some perquisites.

If strangers asked my mother, "Mrs. Comer, how many children do you have?" my mother invariably answered, "Nine living." A hundred times have I heard her say that. One day I asked her, "Why don't you just say, 'Nine'?" Mother answered, "Then I would seem to deny little John Harris."

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We all had duties. I tried to teach the little children but was not a success. I had no control of them. Papa said if I was any account at all, if I was a "little mother" to them (Oh, how I hated those words), they would obey me, would want to obey me. This did not help me. Finally, I believe he sent the children to Dr. DuBose's school.

Life was simple in 1892 in Birmingham. Our pleasures were simple. Our big house had thick carpets everywhere and plenty of books and chairs and tables and beds, but nothing to delight the eye of a decorator. There were no curtains, only Venetian blinds with little slats, and all the children peeped at me when I had callers.

I often had fifty or sixty callers during the afternoons on Sunday. All the girls did. Once, after we had a party for visiting girls, we had one hundred callers. The town was new, with many more men than girls. No Country Club, no automobiles, few people had horses, and so Sunday afternoon calling in groups was the custom.

The men who called on a girl Sunday afternoons were not the men who made engagements with her during the week. These groups of young men usually began with Mattie Morris, Orlene Arnold, and

GOES TO TOWN

Northside girls, and then came out to the Highlands, staying a short time at each house until the next group arrived. It was very interesting. The custom did not last many years.

I remember the housewarming at the new home Gen. Rhodes built on Rhodes Circle (now owned by Herbert and Eva Ryding). The whole town was there—everybody dressed in their best bib and tucker. Everybody was gay. General Rhodes liked papa and his paper was always friendly to us, though at that time we were not active in politics. We were always struggling against a freight rate differential that hampered interstate commerce.

It was several years afterward, when Gen. Rhodes bought for the News a new printing press, he gave a house-warming down town to show it off. It was named "The Marge", for his wife. You could see the name by peeping through the window.

Once papa announced to me that we must go at once to call on the wife of his friend, R. S. Munger. He said they had just moved to town and bought the big house at Five Points. We went and had a pleasant talk with Mrs. Munger. She told us that Mr. Munger could not sleep at night.

He was an inventor and his brain had been so active while working on his cotton gin invention that

Northampton and then on to the village of
 Northampton where it was found that the
 group arrived in the very morning. The women
 did not stay there.

I remember the conversation of the two women
 (one Rhode Island and the other from Northampton)
 (Rhode Island and the other) - The other was a
 Rhode Islander, and she was the one who was
 looking for the other. I remember the conversation
 and the other was the one who was looking for
 at that time the other was looking for the other.
 I remember the conversation of the two women
 that happened in the morning.

It was a very interesting conversation. I remember
 the conversation of the two women. I remember
 a conversation about the other. I remember
 named "The other" - the other. I remember
 the conversation of the two women.

Once they arrived in the morning, they were the
 one to go to the other. I remember the conversation
 He said that the other was the one who was
 the conversation of the two women. I remember
 the conversation of the two women. I remember
 the conversation of the two women.

It was a very interesting conversation. I remember
 the conversation of the two women. I remember
 the conversation of the two women.

THE COMER FAMILY

he could not slow down enough to sleep and even after his invention was completed and patented, she said he was still sleepless.

How the Munger gin people finally consolidated with the Smith gin people of Birmingham, and the Pratt's of Prattville, and became the Continental Gin Company is a thrilling story, but not my story.

The T. T. Hillmans were our most intimate friends. Papa and Mr. Hillman hunted together many years; in the West, in Colorado, in British Columbia, in the Saw Tooth Mountains of Idaho. Once, papa, mother, Mr. and Mrs. T. T. Hillman, Mr. Munger and Dr. George Morrow (sheriff of Jefferson County), were all at Glenwood Springs, Colorado. The men had been hunting elk in the Rockies.

A boy paged Dr. Morrow with a telegram. Mother said Dr. Morrow shouted with joy because the telegram announced that Bart Thrasher, the noted outlaw from Blount County, was dead. Bart Thrasher had killed several men sent out to arrest him, and people rejoiced over the death of a man who had killed so many revenue officers.

The Hillmans were our friends, but papa was always peeved with Mrs. Hillman because she insisted on buying water-ground meal instead of eating his.

GOES TO TOWN

Jim Dandy meal. When papa's flour mill burned down, he opened the Western Grain Company and began to make meal. He was proud of his meal, which he named the Jim Dandy. For a while he made a cheaper meal called the Joe Darter.

Speaking of the Hillmans (for whom is named the Hillman Hotel, and Hillman Hospital), they moved here in 1879, as did Mr. and Mrs. Robert Sterrett, parents of William Cleveland Sterrett. Mrs. Hillman told me they were all staying at that time at the old Relay House (Birmingham's oldest hotel) and that she and Mr. Hillman were kept awake at night by the crying of the Sterrett's baby. That baby, Will Sterrett, is now a man 63 years old. The old Relay House was owned by the parents of George Ward, of Vestavia.

We were always friends with the family of Mr. and Mrs. Perry, who had moved here from Marion, Alabama. When Sam Perry married the lovely Juliet Jolly, I went to the small home wedding with Charles Perry. Miss Fannie Morrow was there with Henry. Tunstall was too young to bring a girl.

It was a merry party and a real wedding feast. Susie, wife of Mr. William Given, Salina, wife of Mr. Charles Fell, Juliet, wife of Governor Dixon, and Henry Perry are children of that union.

THE COMER FAMILY

General Rucker, who lived on "Nabob Hill", was a personal friend of papa's, and was always with us in politics. Louise Rucker, though younger than I, was my friend and one of my bridesmaids. Ed, Jr. was a companion of and friend to both Fletcher and Donald. (It is with a feeling of pride when we pass through Ozark that we see the huge army camp, named in honor of our old Confederate hero, General Rucker.)

Mr. B. F. Roden and my father were friends. Mr. Roden's new brick house was near the site of the Thomas Jefferson Hotel. A debut party was planned for his oldest daughter, Florrie, but in 1891, Florrie surprised her parents by eloping with the handsome young Charlie Davis, so the big party did not take place that fall and Florrie was not a debutante with me.

Mrs. Chappell Cory was, before her marriage, Miss Armstrong. Once, in a yellow fever epidemic in Mobile, she remained at her post in the Western Union office when everyone else had either run away, or died, and she stuck to her machine because there was no one else to take her place. Papa said she was a real heroine. She came to our house to dinner one night shortly afterward, and I looked upon her with reverence. There was yellow fever

every year in New Orleans and Mobile until General Wood cleaned up Havana after the Spanish-American war.

When I was a girl, there was much talk about the cholera epidemic in Birmingham in 1873, and the heroine of that awful time. This woman proved herself a second Florence Nightingale, ministering to the sick and dying. She was a notorious woman. Her name was Lou Wooster, and in 1891, her memory was green because of her heroic struggle in that dread epidemic. Even now, I am told by authorities of Oak Hill Cemetery that fresh flowers are often placed on the grave of Lou Wooster.

Christmas of 1892, I left home for a round of visits. I spent Christmas Eve with Cousin Levisa and Cousin Ed Chamberlin in Atlanta and went to Macon Christmas Day in time for the country club Christmas party. Ruby Jones sent one of her suitors to the train to meet me and take me straight to the club, as she was already at the party.

Mrs. Jones and Ruby felt very uneasy about having a visitor who did not dance. Mrs. Jones confided to me afterwards that she sent Bruce, her seventeen year old son out to the club to peep in and reconnoiter to see if I was "floating" or if I was a wall flower. Returning, he told his mother to have no

fear, that I was doing fine. From that first party, we had a whirl.

Mrs. Jones was sad when she looked at my clothes; she said I really must have another evening dress, as there would be many formal parties. Several hostesses were giving a German, the 1890 name for a formal cotillion. I wired home for another evening dress and the wire arrived before my first letter.

Macon society was altogether different from Birmingham society. Macon, Augusta, Savannah were old cities, with antebellum society. There had been generations of inherited wealth and a leisure class in antebellum days. [In a book called "The Belle of the Fifties" there is a description of the home of my Great-great-uncle Anderson Comer and his beautiful daughters.] The social groups were small and tightly guarded. Birmingham was a gathering of people from all over everywhere, especially of young men who came to try their fortunes in a growing, expanding boom town, where opportunity beckoned.

In 1893, in Macon, society in a way was static. You took the place already belonging to your family. If your family was not "in", well that was just your bad luck. There were many old homes with beautiful interiors and several homes had a grand ballroom.

For this I was doing the best I could, and
 we had a whole

After this I was doing the best I could, and
 the first I could do was to get the
 first part of the book done. I was
 out very early in the morning, and I
 found that I was doing the best I
 could, and the first part of the book
 was done.

After this I was doing the best I could, and
 the first I could do was to get the
 first part of the book done. I was
 out very early in the morning, and I
 found that I was doing the best I
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After this I was doing the best I could, and
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 the morning, and I found that I was
 doing the best I could, and the first
 part of the book was done. I was
 out very early in the morning, and I
 found that I was doing the best I
 could, and the first part of the book
 was done.

Never did any two girls in this world have more attention than was lavished on Ruby and me.

I had a great rush by a young lawyer, James H. Blount, Jr. He was Recorder or Judge of the City Court, and said to be one of the most brilliant lawyers in the Georgia Bar Association.

His father, Col. James H. Blount, had been in Congress twenty years. He had been chairman of the powerful Committee on Rules and for many years had been chairman of the Committee for Foreign Affairs. That position of course made him prominent in the diplomatic corps.

His wife cared little for Washington society, but his daughter, Dorothy, now Mrs. Walter Douglass Lamar, had been brought up in Washington's inner circle of society and was really one of the official hostesses in Washington. Dorothy was always invited to receive with the wives of the cabinet officers.

Everybody told me that young Mr. Blount would follow in his father's footsteps. I had always longed to be the wife of a Congressman. Some one had told me that I was born to shine in political society. Mr. Blount, Jr. could tell a pretty story and paint a rosy future. Somehow, under the spellbinding lovemaking of the young man, I seemed to feel that he only

would be the man for me. However, I gave him no promise.

The plan was that I should stay a month in Macon, then go down to Cuthbert, Georgia, to stay a few days with Uncle Jim and Aunt Dodie McDonald and Grandpa Harris, then go to Eufaula to visit Laurie Comer.

There had been snow in Macon, an unprecedented fall of snow. Mr. Blount had constructed a sleigh (a buggy with runners) and had taken me sleigh riding in the park.

When I arrived in Cuthbert, there were patches of snow in Aunt Dodie's garden. It was February, a beautiful month in South Georgia. Aunt Dodie's garden was a mass of Roman hyacinths in full bloom—the beauty and the fragrance of that garden beggars description. Young Mr. Blount came down to Cuthbert for the week-end.

There was a full moon, the air was like wine. We sat by Aunt Dodie's parlor fire. Then he suggested I put on a coat and walk out in the garden. The moonlight, the heavy fragrance of the hyacinths, the man's ardent love-making, all worked a spell on me, and when he caught me in his arms, I almost swooned with emotion. It might have been the cosmic urge. I thought it was love and I gave him my promise true.

ground for the new house. (The house) I have just now
 begun.

The plan was that I should only have a small house
 that we could use as a study, and I should have a large
 place with a garden, and I should have a large place
 for a house, and I should have a large place for a house.
 (The house) I have just now begun.

I have just now begun to build a new house, and I have
 just now begun to build a new house, and I have just now
 begun to build a new house, and I have just now begun to
 build a new house, and I have just now begun to build a
 new house, and I have just now begun to build a new house.

I have just now begun to build a new house, and I have
 just now begun to build a new house, and I have just now
 begun to build a new house, and I have just now begun to
 build a new house, and I have just now begun to build a
 new house, and I have just now begun to build a new house.
 (The house) I have just now begun.

There was a little house, and I have just now begun to
 build a new house, and I have just now begun to build a
 new house, and I have just now begun to build a new house.
 (The house) I have just now begun.

It was the first time I had ever been kissed.

I did not write home about my promise to marry the young lawyer. I knew papa would be bitterly disappointed. I sent him copies of newspapers about Col. Blount, who had resigned from Congress. After twenty years of Congressional life, the Colonel was tired. Congress had declared a special day in which to meet and pay tribute to this distinguished Southerner and the Georgia papers were full of eulogies heaped upon the retiring member.

Grandpa Harris and Aunt Dodie and Uncle Jim were very much interested and they all liked young Mr. Blount.

After my visit to Cuthbert, I went to Eufaula to stay at Uncle Legare's and Aunt Laura Comer's. Aunt Laura had as many children as we did and they were all living at the old St. Julian's hotel that winter. Why, I don't know.

Jefferson Davis, on his last trip south was the house-guest of Uncle Legare at the St. Julian's hotel in Eufaula, and of Uncle Hugh in Savannah.

Laurie was the belle of Eufaula, golden curls, blue eyes, sunny smile and a lovely voice. Charlie Mercer, from Georgetown, over the river, and Frank Jennings, were ready to fight a duel for Laurie's favors.

Laurie danced like a fairy and men fairly swarmed in her parlor at the hotel. Always with the room full of men calling at night, Laurie and Frank Jennings would disappear, leaving me with the bag to hold. I learned afterwards that she and Frank were off in some secluded spot where they could tell each other about their mutual love.

Uncle Legare was dead set against Frank marrying Laurie because he feared Frank was inclined to drink too much. (They finally ran away to marry and their marriage turned out so splendidly, they will forgive my telling about Uncle Legare's fear of liquor.) But I am getting ahead of my story.

I was having a grand time visiting in Eufaula when one morning I saw in a Montgomery Advertiser that papa's flour mill had burned down the night before, with more than \$100,000.00 loss and no insurance, and that the caretaker was lost in the fire, burned to death.

I said to all my kinsfolk, "Good-bye, I am going home", and I jumped on the first train to Birmingham. Arrived at home, I found my family's chief concern was over the death of the caretaker, who was thought to have fallen asleep while smoking a cigarette. The mill had been losing so much money, the

insurance was so high, papa had allowed it to lapse a few weeks before the holocaust. To my surprise, Papa seemed cheerful; a big leak had been stopped; the mill had been a white elephant.

People commiserated with papa. Everyone said, "Too bad you let your insurance lapse." Finally, papa could no longer stand these Job's comforters; he was, to use slang, "fed up". One day, Sam Barnett met him and said, "Bragg, it is too bad you let your insurance expire, I am sorry for you." Papa retorted, "How sorry are you? What will you give me to start to rebuild?" Papa never cried over spilt milk. Papa and Sam Barnett, both from Barbour County, were friends from boyhood, and in one enterprise they were partners. Papa was only joshing Sam.

One of the children had broken the mirror in a folding bed in the middle bedroom. It had never been mended, it looked cracked and horrid. After the mill burned down, papa said, "We have been having too much bad luck around here, I must get a new mirror put in that folding bed." Immediately, our luck began to change, things got brighter.

It was my father who taught me to look for the new moon—to try to see it clear, through no bushes,

and make a wish, kissing my right thumb over my left shoulder. If I see the new moon through the bushes, it is a bad month ahead. Believe it or not!

I had a letter from Mr. Blount, Jr., saying he was coming, so I had to tell Papa all about my promise. It was a blow to him as he had hoped for me to marry a friend of his who lived in Alabama.

Papa said "This man from Macon is a chance. He may succeed, he may fail. You should not take a chance in marriage, when you have the choice of a man who has already proven himself a success." He did not forbid my engagement, although he tried hard to make me change. He said, "This man is a stranger and a lawyer. I want you to marry a business man." I was determined.

About this time, President Cleveland appointed Col. Blount as Minister Plenipotentiary to Hawaii. The Spreckles family and other American sugar planters were seeking to annex Hawaii and have it made a province so their sugar and pineapples could come in duty free. Queen Liliuokalani wanted Hawaii to be her kingdom.

Col. Blount (nicknamed Paramount Blount) was sent out as a fact finder to decide the issue. A revenue cutter was tendered by the government for the

voyage. Jim Blount urged me to marry him in the spring and go out on the revenue cutter with his parents for a wedding journey. I did not wish to be married that spring, but when he asked me, alluring visions flashed through my mind of parasols—pink lace, ruffly parasols—white lace, blue lace. I thought how exquisite those parasols would look with a summer trousseau in Honolulu.

When Mr. Blount asked papa for me, papa explained that he was very hard up, could take no money out of his business anywhere—the plantation, the bank, the Western Grain Company (he opened the Western Grain Company as soon as his mill burned down). He emphasized the fact that he could give me no dower, would not be able to do so for several years. He made all that very clear. It was arranged that we should be married in November of 1893.

At this time papa was also deeply concerned over the education of Fletcher and Donald. He wished them to go to a good prep school and later to the University of Virginia. Frank Nabers had been to Bingham School, Asheville, N. C. Papa admired Frank in every way—he was the manager of Nabers, Morrow and Sinnige, and for years had doc-

tored us all by proxy, papa explaining our symptoms and Frank sending remedies. Once Frank came to supper and vaccinated every single one of us free.

It was decided to enter Fletcher and Donald for Bingham. Young Bob Bingham had graduated in Frank's class, and to Frank, young Bob was the original glamour man. Bob taught both my brothers at Bingham, and he was always Donald's friend. Perhaps my readers remember him chiefly as Ambassador to the Court of St. James. His son, Barry Bingham, now owns the Louisville Courier-Journal.

Bingham school closed when the old Major died.

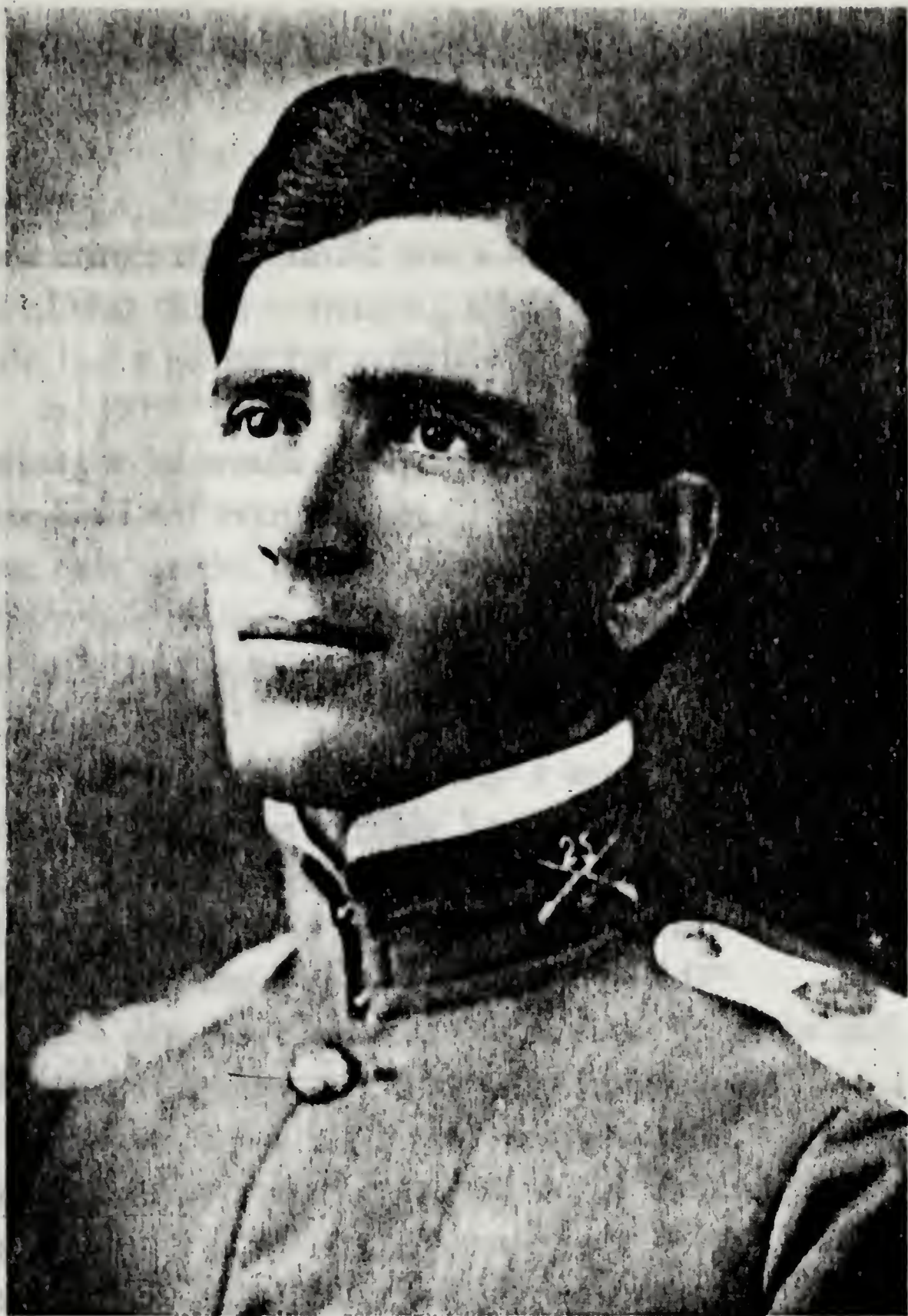
Fletcher and Donald entered Bingham School in 1893. Donald went three years, graduated with first honor, and was made an officer in North Carolina State Militia.

In 1898, when President McKinley appointed one hundred and twenty men second lieutenants, to be selected after competitive examination, Donald won a commission, entered the army and served four years in the United States Army.

While in the Philippines, Donald was raised to the rank of Captain. His adventures as a soldier would make a thrilling story. Donald was a good soldier and the family is proud of his record.



*Donald Comer, as a Captain in the
Philippines in 1901*



—Le Muyon and Rahmeyer, photographers, Manila

Capt. Donald Comer

When the Spanish-American War was over Donald resigned from the army to go into business.

[As the years passed, papa began to lean more and more on Donald, in a business way. He complained sometimes that Donald was a socialist, yet papa realized that this is a changing world and also that Donald had a genius for getting along with people.

In 1919, Donald had pneumonia. The doctors thought he would die; none of us were allowed to see him, not even mother. The doctors said he must see only bright, smiling faces. We never knew how Gertrude managed to keep smiling, but she always smiled at Donald, even when she thought he was dying.

During his illness, one day I went into mother's room. Papa was on his knees, with his head in mother's lap, weeping convulsively. He was saying to her, "Donald is my feet, my hands, my eyes, my ears! How can I go on without Donald?"

One day, Bevelle called me to say, "It is the end. Donald is dying; he already is seeing angels."

Donald, as we all know, got well and has continued to be a blessing to all of his family. When papa died in 1927, he practically left us to Donald's care. We were hung around his neck almost like a string of beads, and he found himself in control

When the specimens were first examined, it was found that the material from the first lot was not good. The first lot was found to be very poor and the second lot was found to be very poor. The third lot was found to be very poor. The fourth lot was found to be very poor. The fifth lot was found to be very poor. The sixth lot was found to be very poor. The seventh lot was found to be very poor. The eighth lot was found to be very poor. The ninth lot was found to be very poor. The tenth lot was found to be very poor. The eleventh lot was found to be very poor. The twelfth lot was found to be very poor. The thirteenth lot was found to be very poor. The fourteenth lot was found to be very poor. The fifteenth lot was found to be very poor. The sixteenth lot was found to be very poor. The seventeenth lot was found to be very poor. The eighteenth lot was found to be very poor. The nineteenth lot was found to be very poor. The twentieth lot was found to be very poor. The twenty-first lot was found to be very poor. The twenty-second lot was found to be very poor. The twenty-third lot was found to be very poor. The twenty-fourth lot was found to be very poor. The twenty-fifth lot was found to be very poor. The twenty-sixth lot was found to be very poor. The twenty-seventh lot was found to be very poor. The twenty-eighth lot was found to be very poor. The twenty-ninth lot was found to be very poor. The thirtieth lot was found to be very poor. The thirty-first lot was found to be very poor. The thirty-second lot was found to be very poor. The thirty-third lot was found to be very poor. The thirty-fourth lot was found to be very poor. The thirty-fifth lot was found to be very poor. The thirty-sixth lot was found to be very poor. The thirty-seventh lot was found to be very poor. The thirty-eighth lot was found to be very poor. The thirty-ninth lot was found to be very poor. The fortieth lot was found to be very poor. The forty-first lot was found to be very poor. The forty-second lot was found to be very poor. The forty-third lot was found to be very poor. The forty-fourth lot was found to be very poor. The forty-fifth lot was found to be very poor. The forty-sixth lot was found to be very poor. The forty-seventh lot was found to be very poor. The forty-eighth lot was found to be very poor. The forty-ninth lot was found to be very poor. The fiftieth lot was found to be very poor. The fifty-first lot was found to be very poor. The fifty-second lot was found to be very poor. The fifty-third lot was found to be very poor. The fifty-fourth lot was found to be very poor. The fifty-fifth lot was found to be very poor. The fifty-sixth lot was found to be very poor. The fifty-seventh lot was found to be very poor. The fifty-eighth lot was found to be very poor. The fifty-ninth lot was found to be very poor. The sixtieth lot was found to be very poor. The sixty-first lot was found to be very poor. The sixty-second lot was found to be very poor. The sixty-third lot was found to be very poor. The sixty-fourth lot was found to be very poor. The sixty-fifth lot was found to be very poor. The sixty-sixth lot was found to be very poor. The sixty-seventh lot was found to be very poor. The sixty-eighth lot was found to be very poor. The sixty-ninth lot was found to be very poor. The seventieth lot was found to be very poor. The seventy-first lot was found to be very poor. The seventy-second lot was found to be very poor. The seventy-third lot was found to be very poor. The seventy-fourth lot was found to be very poor. The seventy-fifth lot was found to be very poor. The seventy-sixth lot was found to be very poor. The seventy-seventh lot was found to be very poor. The seventy-eighth lot was found to be very poor. The seventy-ninth lot was found to be very poor. The eightieth lot was found to be very poor. The eighty-first lot was found to be very poor. The eighty-second lot was found to be very poor. The eighty-third lot was found to be very poor. The eighty-fourth lot was found to be very poor. The eighty-fifth lot was found to be very poor. The eighty-sixth lot was found to be very poor. The eighty-seventh lot was found to be very poor. The eighty-eighth lot was found to be very poor. The eighty-ninth lot was found to be very poor. The ninetieth lot was found to be very poor. The ninety-first lot was found to be very poor. The ninety-second lot was found to be very poor. The ninety-third lot was found to be very poor. The ninety-fourth lot was found to be very poor. The ninety-fifth lot was found to be very poor. The ninety-sixth lot was found to be very poor. The ninety-seventh lot was found to be very poor. The ninety-eighth lot was found to be very poor. The ninety-ninth lot was found to be very poor. The hundredth lot was found to be very poor.

of a property belonging equally to him and to his brothers and sisters.

Each night, when I say my prayers, I thank God for Donald and Gertrude; especially for Gertrude, because without her help Donald could never have grown to his full stature.]

To return to my affairs. We planned a big church wedding and a reception at home. I insisted upon getting invitations from Tiffany (Tiffany has just recently turned the plate over to the army for copper scrap.)

On top of all this expense, a trousseau, big wedding and two boys for prep school, papa decided to take mother, Fletcher, Donald, Mignon and me to Chicago, to the World's Fair. Think of the money he had to get up, in the year of the panic of 1893. He believed the Fair would be an education for us all.

We were thrilled. Many girls married that fall and went to Chicago on their honeymoon. Miss Fanny Morrow and Dr. George Brown; Pauline Caldwell and Charlie Locke; Polly Woodward and Dr. Evans. Polly and I had our trousseaus made at Loveman, Joseph and Loeb's (I have had an account there fifty-one years.) We all got our hats from Miss Kathleen McCrossin.

of a tragedy, following rapidly, and as in
the case of the

last case, when I was present I found that
the patient was female, and the disease
had been rather for some time, and was
not in the early stage.

To mention a few of the points of the
history, and a few of the points of the
physical examination, I found that the
patient had been for some time, and was
not in the early stage.

The one of the most important points of the
history, and the one which was most
important, was the fact that the patient
had been for some time, and was not
in the early stage.

We were able to find out that the patient
had been for some time, and was not
in the early stage.

Finally, the time came for us to start to Chicago. We were to leave at night on the L & N train. Grandma Comer was there to stay with the little children. We were all packed and dressed and eating our supper when the front door bell rang. It arrested our attention—it had an ominous sound. The maid announced a man to see Mr. Comer. Papa went into the library; he stayed and stayed—it seemed to us he would never come out! At last we heard the front door close and papa came back to the dining-room. His face looked grim and strange. He said, "Mr. X (the caller) works in a bank in Birmingham; he has used the bank's money to gamble in cotton, and he has lost. His theft has not been discovered, the bank examiner is due tomorrow; he says unless I give him the money to cover the loss, he will kill himself. He needs \$15,000.00. He says he would rather be dead than to have his mother know he is a thief; he says that I alone can save him." Mother spoke up and said, "We could give up our trip to Chicago and let him have that money." Papa said, "No, we are going."

Papa usually had no sympathy for evil doers. He believed in punishment for sin, but he was truly sorry for that young man.

He said, "I don't believe he will kill himself. It takes a brave man to kill himself."

This episode cast a gloom over our departure, but we all went down to get on the train.

Instead of the Pullman cars we travel in now, we were in a Mann Boudoir car. Each section was a room with a door opening into a long, narrow aisle, at the side of the car. In a few years the Pullman Company bought out the Mann Boudoir people and took their cars off the road.

All of you have read of the World's Fair. Those business men of Chicago showed nerve and courage to promote such a venture in the gloom as thick as that of the Dark Ages—in the years following the Civil War—a war whose ravages and wounds are slow in healing. The World's Fair was to us like the Renaissance in Europe that followed the Dark Ages, and it helped the whole country. Everybody went. Farmers took their wives; working people took their wives. It was a great awakening and seemed to be the dawn of a better day for America.

No need for me to try to describe what we saw. Think of what it meant for us to see the fruits and produce of all foreign lands. One of the things I liked best was the bright, green grass; the grass plots all over the reservation were a delight to my eye.

We spent every day at the Fair. Henry Irving and Ellen Terry were in Chicago to play Shakespeare repertoire. We went to see them play Merchant of Venice. Mignon fell asleep. When we waked her up to go back to the hotel, she yawned and said, "It would have been a good play if they could have left old 'Skylock' out!"

Every day papa would buy a Birmingham paper and read eagerly. One day, after looking at the paper he said, "Well, young Mr. X did kill himself. He shot himself the day the bank examiner came to look at his books. I didn't believe he would do it."

It made us all sad.

When we came home from the Chicago World's Fair in September, only a few weeks were left for getting Fletcher and Donald equipped and off to Bingham School, on top of a mountain outside Asheville, N. C., and for my wedding, planned for November ninth.

Aunt Dodie, a most expert needlewoman, had made all my trousseau underwear (we did not use the word "lingerie" in those days). There was a dozen of each article, chemises, nightgowns, pantalletts, white cotton, ruffled petticoats. My best set was of linen lawn, with real lace.

"The speaker said to me, 'I have found out
 that there is a difference in the way
 people think. I have found out that
 people think in different ways. I have
 found out that people think in different
 ways. I have found out that people
 think in different ways. I have found
 out that people think in different ways.'"

Every day we find out more and more
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It is a very interesting thing to find out
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Mother gave me piles of household linen and blankets and pillows, and an entire set of Haviland china, in wildrose pattern, and another set for everyday use.

I wrote an exhaustive sketch of my wedding at First Church, and the reception afterwards, describing everything, and when I read it and realized the burden these festivities had imposed upon my mother, I wept and destroyed the sheets. My poor mother! What she must have gone through in getting ready for my wedding!

Every nook and cranny of our house was filled with visiting uncles and aunts and cousins. We had many Negroes to help with the work—Negro friends of ours from the plantation, but none of them trained in expert service. Our house guests were there more than two days and nights.

The day of the wedding, I wandered into the diningroom and found our old mammy nurse, Betsy (who had come over from Anniston), getting ready to set the table for luncheon for twenty guests.

I said, "Let me help."

Betsy immediately began to relate to me a story about the wild and stormy night the week before, when baby Evelyn Scott was born to my beloved friend, Minnie Parker Scott, and about how Mr. Scott jumped on his horse and rode away into the storm.

GOES TO TOWN

Just then, my mother came into the dining room. Never will I forget the look upon her face, when she saw that Betsy and I had set the table with all the china, silver and glass on a silence cloth, forgetting to put on a linen tablecloth!

Mother was disgusted. She advised me to go upstairs into the sewing room, lock the doors and try to gather my wits together. I was almost in a trance, of no help to anybody.

This incident proves the sort of help my mother had in putting over this house-party and wedding reception. I will not try to tell about the wedding. Many people in Birmingham will remember that they came to the party, just forty-nine years ago.

Not until I had children and grown-up grandchildren of my own did I begin to realize what a great woman was my mother.

She was never so happy after we left the plantation. She loved country life and the great open spaces. She loved to be out in the sunshine. She missed Mrs. Mallory, who had always advised and helped with domestic affairs.

It is wonderful for children coming home from school to open the front door and call out, "Mother, where are you?" and to hear the same answer of welcome each day. Always schoolmates came with

our children. Henry Gray, Jr., was practically raised with our little brother, Hugh.

We had barrels of apples, bunches of bananas, bushels of nuts and all the children could help themselves.

One day, when several bushels of chestnuts were being sunned on our side back piazza, I saw Edgar Bowron filling several paper sacks with nuts. I said, "What are you doing?" Edgar answered, "You have so many nuts, I thought I would take some home to Tom and Jack and Ed."

Papa always came home for lunch, and after lunch, smoked a cigar and rested on the bed a few minutes before returning to his office. He liked for mother to go for a little buggy or carriage ride in late afternoons. Mother's only engagements were with him.

She was a happy woman, but after she left the plantation never again was she gay as a lark, and never again did she sing "Billy Boy".

"Can she make a cherry pie, Billy Boy, Billy Boy?
Can she make a cherry pie, Charming Billy?
Yes, she can make a cherry pie
Quick as a cat can wink his eye;
But she's a young thing and cannot leave her
mother."

unpublished letters to the author, and the author's
 various other papers.

The collection is now in the hands of the
 British Museum, and the author's papers are
 in the hands of the author's family.

On the 10th of the month of the year
 being passed, the author's papers were
 given to the British Museum, and the
 author's family papers were given to the
 author's family. The author's papers
 are now in the hands of the British
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GOES TO TOWN

I intended to close this sketch with the sound of wedding bells, but when I realized all the burden imposed on my mother by this wedding, I felt sad and began to think on other lines. Some day perhaps my story will be continued. Just now I am wondering how she survived, with all the demands we made upon her.

Psychologists teach that youth is a period of selfish egotism—that Nature takes this way of perpetuating the species. Any reader of these pages will realize that I was a careless, selfish girl, thinking only of myself and not concerned with the heavy burdens carried by my parents.

Every year I realize more and more how we needed my mother, how we leaned on her, how we used her, never realizing till she was gone that she was the very life and light of our home, and when she died the light went out!

APPENDIX

Editorial by Mr. C. M. Stanley, published in the Montgomery Journal May 26th, 1942, on occasion of unveiling of bronze bust of my father at the State Capitol:

COMER MEMORIAL

A bronze memorial bust of Braxton Bragg Comer is being unveiled with appropriate ceremonies in the Hall of Flags of the Department of Archives and History today. It is fitting to have the rugged features of this strong and purposeful man among the other great figures of the state in order that visitors and students may be made acquainted with the personal appearance of one who made such a deep and lasting impression upon Alabama during his eventful life.

When Governor Comer entered public life as president of the railroad commission in 1905 and as governor in 1907 an old epoch of state history ended and a new epoch began. He saw his state being exploited, plundered and spoiled worse than at any time during reconstruction. Legislators were bought

APPENDIX

Editorial to the 10th Annual Meeting of the
American Society for the Advancement of Science
of 1901, at the University of Chicago, Chicago,
Illinois.

General Introduction

A large number of papers have been
presented at the annual meeting of the
American Society for the Advancement of Science
at the University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois,
from 1901 to 1902. The papers are of a
highly original and important character,
and many of them are of a nature which
will be of great value to the scientific
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and many of them are of a nature which
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community.

The American Society for the Advancement of
Science was organized in 1847, and has since
that time been engaged in the promotion of
the advancement of science. The society
has been successful in its efforts, and has
been instrumental in the advancement of
science in many ways. The society has
been instrumental in the advancement of
science in many ways.

and sold. Powerful interests maintained their offices in the state capitol. One lobbyist had his desk in the capitol corridors. Taxes were shirked; schools suffered; men feared the powerful privileged interests fattening at the public expense; they were so entrenched that they could elect or defeat at will.

It was in such a situation that B. B. Comer came on the scene. He was independently wealthy. He was a fighter such as has rarely been seen before or since. He knew his subject. He feared no man and no private interest. His energy and indignation swept over the state with the force of a tornado.

His enemies, the interests which had been exploiting the state and its people, said he was a corporation baiter, a destructive force, a demagogue—in fact called him all the names in the English language. But Gov. Comer, far from being a destructive force, was one of the most constructive and upbuilding forces in the state's history. He had a passion for justice and a hatred of injustice. In his first message to the legislature he declared: "I pledge the faith of this administration to the full protection of our corporations in the proper exercise of their lawful functions."

To right the old wrongs meant a hard fight. It tore the state wide open. It required vast readjust-

and all the other things which are mentioned in the text. The first thing mentioned is the fact that the author is a man of letters. This is followed by a list of the various things which the author has written. The list includes a number of books and articles, and it is clear that the author is a very prolific writer. The list also includes a number of other things which the author has done, such as giving lectures and editing books. The list is very long and it is not possible to list all of the things which the author has done. However, it is clear that the author is a very accomplished man and that he has made a great contribution to the world of letters.

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ments in state economics. It initiated court proceedings and controversies which lasted for years. It was bitter fighting and left wounds that were long in healing. But when it was over the record of the Comer administration stood out as probably the greatest in achievement in Alabama's history. He was the great "educational governor." He built a county high school in every county of the state. He erected new buildings and increased the appropriations of the higher institutions. He told his legislature that "a good government is not necessarily a cheap government." He insisted that money lying in the treasury be put to work, and he built school houses with it. He brought the taxdodgers to taw, and equalized assessment to make the privileged pull their share of the load. He attacked and subdued the liquor dragon which had become a bad influence in state and local politics.

Gov. Comer, who was the owner of thousands of acres of land in his native Barbour County, who was head of a great cotton mills industry, who was named by Gov. Kilby to fill a vacancy in the United States Senate in 1920, was in every way an exceptional man. Born in 1848 he was a boy student at the University of Alabama when the buildings were burned by the

THE COMER FAMILY

Union forces in 1865. Escaping with his classmates to Marion, Alabama, he walked all the way from the Perry county seat to his home at Old Springhill in Barbour county. He became a banker, merchant, plantation owner, grain mill operator, textile manufacturer and a leader in everything with which he came in contact. He was a big game hunter who roamed the Rocky mountains and the wilds of Alaska. He was as hard as nails, both literally and figuratively. And he reared a family of nine children who have had vast influence upon the economic, cultural, moral and political life of the state since the death of the distinguished father in 1927.

The memorial bust of such a man will serve a worthy purpose in recalling the life and deeds of this powerful and dynamic leader.



*Comer plantation house built more than 100 years ago by John Fletcher Comer—
birthplace of my father, Braxton Bragg Comer. Barbour County, Ala.*

